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GREEK AND CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES
OF LANGUAGE FACE TO FACE

**Greek and Contemporary
Philosophies of Language Face to Face**

Introduction

Begoña Ramón Cámara
Universitat de València, Espanya

During the last decades, philosophy of language has progressively discovered and recognized that it not only has, as it is obvious, a history behind, but also, so to say, inside itself. It is a history that, whether noticed or not, has during the last century conditioned in different ways the research on language, and it can contribute, if it is carefully investigated, to make that research more conscious of its own object and, above all, more theoretically fruitful.

The twentieth century has certainly not lacked a series of studies about some prominent moments in the history of the research on language. A particular reference must be done to the studies devoted to the first phases of the analytical philosophy of language; those phases that have in Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein as the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, their main representatives. As for the age of Romanticism, it suffices to remind the importance of Herder's philosophy of language in Ch. Taylor's thought or M.N. Foster's investigations on German philosophy of language from Schlegel to Hegel. For the early modern age, the most obvious examples are the studies on Locke's semantics or on Leibniz's linguistic ideas, but also the debates and controversies provoked by Chomsky's notion of "Cartesian linguistics". Going further back in time, for medieval philosophy we find numerous studies on the problem of the universals, the notion of the *suppositio*, etc. And it is of particular interest the research on the philosophy of language in ancient Greece and Rome, from the studies on the linguistic ideas of the Sophists to the investigations on Plato's *Cratylus*, and from the studies on Cicero and the problem of the Latin translation of Greek philosophical terms to the numerous investigations on Augustine's notion of *signum*.

In some cases, that on this occasion are for us the most significant, those studies have not been simply guided by a historical-reconstructive spirit or by an exclusively critical-philological motivation, but also by the conviction that a wider or deeper awareness of the history of the reflection on language, in its different moments and articulations, could give and provide new reading keys to contemporary research on language, which, after the peaks reached in the twentieth century, often seemed to have come to a dead end – or, at least, to an excessively specialised point – or to have lost its original philosophical impulse.

The essays collected in this issue of *The Journal for the Philosophy of Language, Mind and the Arts* coincide, each one of them according to the specificity of its author, in that spirit that, as it was said above, assigns not only a historical-reconstructive value, but also a theoretical one, to the re-reading of the texts on language pertaining to our immense and complex philosophical tradition. After the preceding issue devoted to Leibniz, the present issue focuses on the comparison between some moments in contemporary philosophy of language and the conceptions of language developed within the context of ancient Greek philosophy. The fundamental idea driving it is to bring together specialists in language who consider to be essential for their theoretical undertaking to confront what was said about language in classical tradition, and specialists in Greek philosophy of language who think that, read in the light of contemporary philosophy of language, many ancient pages may reveal new aspects to us, and that the historical reconstruction may come out richer and more percipient.

This issue, therefore, has not been conditioned, in the selection of authors and topics, by any preference with respect to one school of thought or another. If an analytical spirit pervades, so to say, some of its essays, in others the atmosphere is much more 'continental', not lacking references to Foucault or to Heidegger. It can also be remarked that the three essays, by James C. Klagge, Anthony Bonnemaison, and Felice Cimatti, devoted to Wittgenstein – on his relation with Socrates and Plato, in the first two cases, and with Stoicism, on the last one – are inspired by theoretical attitudes that are very different from each other.

In the essays collected here many topics are dealt with: from the idea of philosophy as a way of acting to the question of the relation between philosophy and poetry; from the problem of the relation between persuasion and truth to the presence of Aristotelian motifs in the contemporary debate – analytical, but also "continental" – about self-consciousness and meaning; from the centrality of the question about names in Plato to the relation between Wittgenstein's notion of linguistic use and the Stoic theme of λεκτόν, and even to the ways in which Plato and Wittgenstein work out a grammar of knowledge.

That philosophy, and so much more philosophy of language, "works as a discourse, and that this discourse is also a discourse on the limits of language", is the idea discussed by Marcello La Matina in "Acting and Behaving: The Philosopher in Ancient Greece and Late Modernity". Trying to answer the question about the role, the discourse, and the way of operating of philosophy, and asking himself, in particular, whether they should be redirected to a way of acting instead of to a way of behaving, La Matina, through a confrontation between ancient Greek and modern philosophy's practices, arrives at the answer that it is a prerogative of philosophy that it "enables us to reflect (especially historically) on the meaning of a life in theory, the role of *logos*, and the praxis within current discursive and philosophical practices". This "characterizes the work of the philosopher as a 'doing' or practice and saves him from lapsing into mere behaviour".

In most of the essays contained in this issue, Greek philosophy is put in dialogue with philosophers, authors, or themes of contemporary philosophy. In his "The Efficacy of True Speech: Gorgias between Rorty and Foucault", Mauro Serra, in contrast with the traditional interpretation of Gorgias' philosophy – according to which for this sophist there would not be any place for truth, but only for persuasion – proposes to "investigate the complex relationship between truth and efficacy in the functioning of language" that is traceable in Gorgias' philosophy and to bring it closer to the thought of Rorty and Foucault, as they both, "albeit in different way, place this relationship in a political framework".

In her essay "Being Worthy of One's Name: Platonic Tensions between Language and Reality", Lidia Palumbo centres on the crucial role played in Plato's *Dialogues* by names as they "represent something akin to models to be imitated or goals to be attained". Throwing light particularly on the Homeric origin of this centrality of names, and putting it into the context of the παιδεία, she shows that Plato's *Dialogues* "lead us towards philosophy by encouraging us to become *worthy of our names*".

Three essays of this issue deal with Wittgenstein's relation with Greek philosophy. "Wittgenstein vs. Socrates: Wittgenstein and Plato", by James C. Klagge, presents and discusses some aspects of Wittgenstein's disagreement with Socrates' attitude, starting from the fact that Wittgenstein excludes all kind of essentialist definition of words. Klagge emphasises Wittgenstein's differences with Socrates also focusing on the case of good. On the contrary, there emerges a sympathy for Plato, particularly for its ability to characterise the people in his dialogues and to find "ways of making philosophy poetic", offering "myths that supplement his arguments". The essay by Anthony Bonnemaison, entitled "What Does 'To Know Something' Mean?: Plato and Wittgenstein on the Grammar of Knowledge", provides an attempt to read some important aspects of Plato's thought,

in particular and mainly the infallibility of knowledge, in the light of Wittgenstein's analysis of the grammar of knowledge. Felice Cimatti, in his "Λεκτόν and Use: Wittgenstein and the Incorporeal", deals with the topic of the "'incorporeal' character of the meanings of linguistic expressions", comparing Wittgenstein's solution of meaning as use with the Stoic solution based in the notion of λεκτόν, as something "incorporeal", but also "the corporeal product of what human speakers do when they utter a verbal utterance".

Two essays are devoted to Aristotle and his modern interpretations. "Aristotle and Inner Awareness", by Manuel García Carpintero, locates Aristotle's views, as found in his *De anima* and as interpreted by Victor Caston, in the context of the current debate on consciousness and self-awareness, also offering some considerations in favour of following Aristotle on this matter. As regards the essay by David Hereza Modrego, "Λόγος as an Anti-Psychologistic Conception of Meaning: Heidegger's Interpretation of the Aristotelian Notion of Language in the Light of Its First Courses (1921-1927)", it presents and tries to clarify Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of λόγος. As Hereza Modrego tries to show, in the Aristotelian notion of λόγος Heidegger discovered an anti-psychologistic conception of meaning and language that can provide a better understanding of the role of truth and of phenomenology.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the scholars who have contributed to this issue of *JoLMA* and to those who evaluated their essays. I also want to thank Filippo Batisti for his invaluable collaboration in the preparation of this volume, and José García Roca for his support in this project, as in many others.

Acting and Behaving: The Philosopher in Ancient Greece and Late Modernity

Marcello La Matina
Università degli Studi di Macerata, Italia

Abstract   Around the world scientific output has reached ungovernable levels; far more is written than can possibly be read. Also, there are increasingly clear signs of rampant conformity within the scientific community. Where does philosophy stand in all this? Can we continue to claim that the role of knowledgeable persons and the discourse with which they impart their knowledge are (free, individual) ways of acting? Or should both role and discourse be considered mere modes of (conformist, impersonal) behaviour? By comparing modern practices to models of ancient Greek philosophy, philosophy of language enables us to reflect (especially historically) on the meaning of a life in theory, the role of *logos*, and the praxis within current discursive and philosophical practices. Our thesis is that the doing of the ancient philosopher (his form of life) works as a discourse, and that this discourse is also a discourse on the limits of language.

Keywords   Agency. Discourse Analysis. Forms of Rationality. Greek Philosophy of language. Greek Philosophical Patristics. Language Games. Forms of Life.

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> What has to be accepted, the given, is – one might
> say – *forms of life*
> Wittgenstein 1953, *PU* II.XI

1 States of Affairs

1.1 Behaving / Acting

We keep at it, but nothing sticks. For many of us today, life looks like a never-ending to-do list. A list of things that tend to build up without animating our life, things we don't want to do, but must do. The result is that our 'affairs', so to speak, have made room for a new and painful alienation. Even in distal space – where individual existences are attached to community projects, where the affairs of each are integrated into larger social structures – one can sense a widespread inability to act; this leads to a loss of attention span.[1] "Men", Hannah Arendt wrote (1958, 41), apprehensively, in the postwar period, "*behave and do not act* with respect to each other" (my italics). In other words, agency, which the Greeks considered the mark of man,[2] had acceded to mere behaviour.[3] And in a world in which "we behave" without acting, "society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to 'normalise' its members, to make them behave, to exclude spontaneous action or outstanding achievement" (Arendt 1958, 41). Individuals find themselves overwhelmed by procedures and rules that they can neither choose nor refuse, surrounded by a kind of conformity that one contemporary philosopher (Di Cesare 2018, 11-16) rightly called "saturated immanence", where nothing really changes and the difference between what is shared and what is owned, between the business of the *omnes* and the behaviour of the *singulatim*, is no more. If the community in which we now live is modelled on the ontological structures of this bizarre 'quodlibetal

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[1] On the consequences of this apraxia, see for instance Constas 2017; Della Briotta Parolo et al. 2015.

[2] According to Arendt 1958, 41, the counterposition of behaviour and action, of Greeks and Moderns, determines that "modern equality, based on the conformism inherent in society and possible only because behavior has replaced action as the foremost mode of human relationship, is in every respect different from equality in antiquity, and notably in the Greek city-states".

[3] In Arendt's opinion (1958, 40), modern conformism is so compelling that "society, on all its levels, excludes the possibility of action, which formerly was excluded from the household".

singularity,'[4] it should not come as a shock that action has become indistinguishable from mere behaviour. There is no action, just behaviour; therefore, everything risks appearing meaningless. The words of the ancient *Qohelet* come to mind:

> What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. […] Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. (*Qoh*, 3-8)[5]

Everything is in motion, nothing takes place. The ancient Greek lyric poets summed up the consequences of this human condition with a single word: τὸ ἀμήχανον, or 'to be without means', unable to be able. A widespread feeling of fatuity envelops human things. And that has driven scholars from various disciplines to ask themselves what has happened to agency today; where does it fit into our way of planning for the future and living in the world. We might also ask ourselves – as someone wrote exactly one hundred years ago – whether the world is really the totality of *facts* ("die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen": Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* §1.1), or whether man is still the proprietor of his own facticity. Answers to these questions are most often sought in the fields of ethics or politics, in artificial intelligence. Posed in the context of a suffering planet and a world makes unreasonable demands of individuals and, often, nations, reason[6] is in a state of aporia.

1.2 "So machen wir's"

It bears repeating that modern futility, the ματαιότης of late modernity, doesn't mean nothing gets done, but that acting is impossible or unachievable; in other words, doing can't be converted into action. We can call this characteristic of late modernity *apraxia* and observe that it doesn't only apply to ordinary life (to κοινὸς βίος) but to βίος

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4 The idea of 'quodlibetal singularity' is put forward by Agamben (2008). Although I consider Agamben's analysis sophisticated and highly original, I would adapt his conception to the one condition of social inauthenticity, to a uniform, conformist, mass society. La Matina 2022 argues that quodlibetal singularity, or the *quodlibet ens* of medieval logic (or what Deleuze called 'une vie') can exist only in the backdrop of an ontology that still has individuals. Accordingly, it essentially involves valuing the contrast between the individual and the community, so that the *Eigentlichkeit* of the individual has to be maintained in an ontology that rejects Platonic quantification.

5 Unless otherwise specified, all translations are from the Author.

6 On this debate see two classics: Gargani 1979; Vattimo, Rovatti 1983.

θεωρητικός, to the life of the scholar, to the doings of the scientist.[7]
Isn't it true that a lot of today's science appears like a great produc-
tion chain that fails to affect or handle our problems and instead con-
tents itself with itemising them or furnishing partial and short-lived
answers? Isn't it true that many scientists, hemmed in by the rigid 'pub-
lish or perish' laws, seem bereft of the freedom which is itself a charac-
ter of human action? Conformism seems to hold sway over the doings
of science, too.[8] This suggests that even a life in theory, for centuries
guided by individual intentionality alone, "behavior has replaced ac-
tion as the foremost mode of human relationships" (Arendt 1958, 42).
This levelling effect of conformity indicates a stark divide between the
way of life of modern thinker and the way of life that flourished in the
ancient Greek world. In antiquity, one was under constant pressure to
distinguish himself from others; in other words, the public realm was
a space reserved for individuality (Arendt 1958, 42). In today's oppres-
sive and confused climate, perhaps the time has come for intellectu-
als to ask themselves the fundamental question posed by Aristotle in
his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1097b.24-5): is there an action that can be
considered the action of living man? Is there an *ergon*, a *praxis* or the
like that can be considered the measure and praxical horizon of a be-
ing capable of language?[9]

    And what if this human-specific activity were philosophy? If phi-
losophy is *the* human form of life, can today's philosopher refuse to
ask himself, and all the sciences, what his business means? Of course
not. To someone who asks him to account for what he does, he could
not respond with a brusque, 'So machen wir's'. That's just how it's
done. Were he to, then it would be difficult to classify the practice of
philosophers today as a way of *acting* instead of a way of *behaving*
(like a coy and rhetorical language game). It would mean that con-
formity – which, from time immemorial, philosophy has deprecated
as evil – has penetrated the practices that we continue to label phil-
osophical. The job of philosophy today is therefore twofold. On the
one hand, 1) *it must analyse scientific doings*. That doesn't mean ana-
lysing the stated products of this or that scientific field; it must take
a greater interest in the process of scientific practices than in facts.
On the other hand, 2) *it must submit its own practices, its own norms,
to the same kind of inquiry*. It must reflect on the philosopher's own
'doings', on his aims and the evidence needed to evaluate their im-
portance. But what we're saying is comparable, if philosophers still

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7   See e.g. Della Briotta Parolo et al. 2015; see also Power 1997.

8   See on this the contributions collected in Dal Lago 2013. See also Deneault 2015.

9   It must be said that the question of what an action means would retain its meaning
even if postmodern man's agency were no longer (or never had been) that ζωὴ πρακτική
τις τοῦ λόγον ἔχοντος about which ancient philosophers spoke.

believe in it, to what Wittgenstein (1980, 16) wrote: that philosophy is really a philosopher's inquiry into himself, into his way of seeing things. That is the only way to flesh out the nature of the philosopher's doings: is it action or behaviour?

1.3   Ideals or *Idola Tribus*?

Both tasks present unknown variables. One in particular: which philosophy could tell the philosopher what he's doing? In fact, today we are witnessing an explosion of philosophers and philosophies. In a delicious pamphlet published a few years ago, Italian philosopher Diego Marconi (2010) analysed this question, based on observations that partly overlap with our own. The phenomenology of the contemporary philosopher proposed in the book is very useful: it goes from the specialist philosopher – the professional – to the homemade philosopher and ultimately arrives at the phenomena of media philosophers and popularisers of all things philosophical. Marconi is a proponent of professionalism in philosophy, so what he argues about the difficulty generated by the superfetation of philosophers and self-styled philosophical works is particularly interesting: "Specialism", Marconi writes, "is imposed by the proliferation of scientific literature, which is itself the consequence of the colossal expansion of higher education which happened in the twentieth century" (2010, 13). Because far more philosophy is written than anyone can read in a lifetime, so the philosopher means to tell us, there needs to be a committee that safeguards real philosophy. Given its methods and tangible results, for Marconi real philosophy closely resembles (though doesn't completely overlap with) analytical philosophy. In one of his most widely translated books, another influential Italian philosopher, Emanuele Coccia (2018, 141-2), takes the opposite view, taking to task the professionalisation of philosophy. Coccia argues that specialism is the product of a "cognitive and sentimental education which is hidden, or, more often, forgotten and repressed"; somewhat unnatural, almost repressive. Consequently, Coccia reckons that specialism is an attitude that:

> does not define an excess of knowledge, but a knowing and voluntary repudiation of the knowledge of 'others.' It isn't the expression of boundless curiosity in an object, but the fearful and scrupulous observation of a cognitive taboo.

Mention is made of these two independently generated arguments just as a cursory example of the long and heated debate taking place in Europe and the United States, one which interests not only philosophers but scholars from various fields, including anthropology,

epistemology and cybernetics. At play are different discursive models, various – and often incompatible – forms of reasoning. Hence the issue at stake is the following: how to evaluate – in light of this debate about scientific reasoning – discursive practices and language games that are different from the one presently dominant? If the work to be done is the analysis of nature and ways of 'doing' philosophy, what sense does, for example, the reference to the philosophy of the ancient Greek language make? In fact, the dominant model, not only in hard sciences, is Cartesian, in which many sides claim to recognise that universality and absoluteness that could even make it the yardstick for every epistemic and discursive practice in the future.

The underlying idea is that knowledge is acceptable only if translated into an impersonal, atemporal and logically *constrictive* scientific discourse (think *Protokollsätze*): it's the idea of rational reconstruction.[10] The Cartesian model appears 'objectified' because it declines to adopt any resource that comes from a context in which the assertions to evaluate have been produced. In semiotic terms, we'd say that it *is insensitive to the instant of enunciation*. That this conception has illustrious and time-honoured forebears[11] doesn't shield it from attack. Semiotics, for example, has plenty of the presumed objectivity of scientific discourse (and, therefore, of that philosophy considered akin to scientific discourse). Analysing scientific practices, Algirdas J. Greimas, to cite just one of the more important names, called it a type of discursive manipulation capable of producing *camouflage objectivante* (objective camouflage). Here he is describing the mechanism of scientific language:

> [To be] accepted as true, 'scientific discourse' tries to appear as if it were not the discourse of the subject, but as a pure enunciated of necessary relations between things, hiding, as much as possible, every mark of enunciation. We know that an enunciated like *the earth is round* presupposes constructions like 'I say that,' 'I know that,' 'I am sure that' *the earth is round*... The subject of the enunciation is both eliminated by impersonal constructions and socialised by the installation of 'one' and 'we'... In this case knowledge is manifest as 'true' and the hidden subject as 'false'... One understands why the concept of *truth* is increasingly replaced with the concept of *efficiency* in contemporary epistemology.[12]

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10   The method of rational reconstruction was the subject of a debate also at the recent Conference of the 'British Society for the History of Philosophy', by title *Philosophy and Historiography* (3-5 April 2006) at Robinson College, Cambridge (UK). See on this: Santi 2007, 149-53.

11   I refer here to the so-called 'postulate of objectivity' as shown in Schrödinger 1948.

12   Greimas 1980, 110-11. In many pages of Ludwig Wittgenstein one can find observations on phenomena related to linguistic enunciation. The topic would require a spe-

It's quite evident that contemporary philosophy is experiencing a tension between different practices, each of which relies on rules of discursive efficiency that other philosophers find distant and often, even, incompatible. This tension runs through philosophical discourse and binds it to two instances: respect for the discursive regime of its representative community and respect for the 'context of discovery'. It is not important how the tension is resolved; the question remains: what evidence can I put forward to show that what I do when I believe I am practicing philosophy is my own action and not mere behaviour? Some, I imagine, might object that the idea of someone saying to themselves 'what I'm doing now is an action' is an illusion, since every action is also the result of social and environmental conditioning. It's a valid objection, but in this case misses the mark. One of the jobs of philosophy has always been to render the philosophising subject aware of conditions that he cannot see. Just to stay within the boundaries of the ancient Greek world, think of Plutarch, *De profectibus in virtue*, where the discourse search for evidence useful for assessing the philosopher's progresses; in contrast to the opinion of the Stoics Plutarch (76b) speaks explicitly of a consciousness of change (τὴν συναίσθησιν […] τῆς μεταβολῆς), which he describes as a sensation of emerging from some abyss (ὥσπερ ἐκ βυθοῦ τινος ἀναφερομένοις). As we shall find later on, that was the exact purpose of the 'philosophical exercises' of Hellenistic schools.

1.4   Being Right in Ancient Greece

In a well-documented and original essay, the Hellenist Andrea Cozzo (2001) argues against the dominant Cartesian model, casting a light on the existence of extremely different forms of reasoning in the Greek world, from Homer to late antiquity, capable of stimulating a more ample reflection on the meaning of the practices of science and philosophy. I'll limit myself to summarising a few of its aspects. As early as the age of Homer, the Greeks debated the problem of the politics of discourse; their debate was not limited to the level of the enunciated, which is to say the forms of argumentation, but included forms of conversing and thinking. From Cozzo's patient reconstruction, there emerges an historic phenomenology of 'forms of being

cial essay. Here I will only mention two texts where Wittgenstein draws attention to the asymmetry between the first-person grammar and the third-person grammar: (1) the *Notes for Lectures on "Private Experience" and "Sense Data"* and (2) *The Language of Sense Data*, presumably written between 1934 and 1936. Perissinotto 2007, XXII-XXIII, clarifies the basis for this asymmetry and discusses the so-called 'metaphysics of the first person', showing how it lays the foundations for the 'First Person Authority', which is much discussed in the philosophy of language.

right' in a discursive context: not just one model, but many models. In Homer, for example, there is an aristocratic management of ways of speaking, governed by a traditional hierarchy (2001, 25-83). In modern terms, we might say that arguments accepted in that context are what Nelson Goodman (1979, 94-5) would call "well entrenched": the connection between speakers is strong and capable of stimulating a persuasive (*peithein*) or coercive (*peithesthai*) acceptance. On the contrary, in fifth century Athens the word is decontextualised and there emerges a discursive model charged with mediating between different social and ethnic groups. A type of *logos* begins to surface, one that is not well entrenched in *mythoi* but capable of exemplifying formal nexuses that break from tradition. This new *logos* is increasingly presented as the privileged site for convergence (*homonoia*, *harmonia*) and confutation (*elenchos*).

If narrow attitudes toward models of reasoning which depart from the dominant model are what we call 'dogmatic', then clearly forms of dogmatism dotted the panorama of Greek thought. Cozzo (2001, 266-301) writes lucidly about the crisis of the second century AD, when a dogmatic model was taking shape that assumed it could act as judge and jury of *logos*. Sextus Empiricus witnessed the debate between dogmatists who sought to establish criteria for evaluating scientific and philosophical discourse (and, in some cases, lifestyles) on the one hand and, on the other, people who rejected the existence of any absolute criterion. What emerges in the attitude of the dogmatists, argues Cozzo (2001, 269), is "the violent force of *logos*, its universalist claims" – manifest in the claim that one can play the game and referee it at the same time. What happened then bears a striking resemblance to what is happening today, when a single model of reasoning has become normative and functions, so to speak, on two levels: as a *disciplinary discourse* (of a given science, of a given philosophical school) and as a *discursive discipline* (of science as a whole, of philosophy as a whole).

Where dogmatists – ancient and contemporary – err is in their flat-out rejection that they belong to a community and tradition, or sometimes just a standard of preferences. It is precisely when one rejects their belonging that the discursive regime can trigger behaviours of mimetic gregariousness. Whereas when we recognise that we can never completely shirk the weight of tradition, when we admit our debt to our forebears, we forge a means of suspending dogmatism, often via *epoché*, or the suspension of judgment. In both the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, Greek schools of philosophy were a hotbed of dogmatism and its antidotes. So, I should like to dedicate the last part of this article to the forms of Greek philosophy that come closest to rejecting their own and others' dogmatism. It may come as a surprise that among these schools of thought were movements then adopting the name Christianity, which would give rise to what we now call Patristics, or the philosophy of the Fathers of the Church.

2 Forms of Life as Enunciation-Games

2.1 Stop Behaving

Michael Frede (2005, 6) once wrote:

> [Nowadays], when we study ancient philosophy, we are guided by our present-day conception of philosophical practice. We can easily lose sight of the fact that the ancient philosophers we're studying had a much different idea about what they were doing.

Can the same be said of the philosophy of language? Actually, philosophy only began to find an expression in physics, logic, and ethics with the Hellenistic schools; otherwise, it was not organised in a rigid fashion but 'smeared', like an assumption or ingredient, over scientific, theological and poetical discourse. Nevertheless, says Hadot (1995, 56), there was an immense gulf between generically philosophical assumption that inform (literary, scientific, etc.) texts and the activity which Hadot himself would be willing to label "authentic philosophy". In fact, authentic philosophising always involves a break with what philosophers call βίος, i.e., ordinary life.

Some will argue that, as a rule of thumb, we could recognise something as an ancient philosophy (and philosophy of language) just by enumerating the writings that have been preserved by tradition as philosophical (philosophical-linguistic). But such an operation would force us to recognise as philosophical only that which has already been accepted as philosophical by those who came before us.[13] On the other hand, it would not help us to recognise as philosophical something that is not accepted, but that, let us imagine, was by the ancients. Philosophy can't be recognised only in the corpus of texts that have been handed down to us, nor can the practice of philosophy be preliminarily defined on the basis of textual production alone: the *affaire* Socrates teaches. On the contrary, recognising something as a "philosophy" by the ancients – beyond grasping a certain number of conceptual contents or identifying some texts as philosophical – involves recognising a philosopher's *break* from κοινὸς βίος; a caesura that sets the philosopher – ever a potential hermit – apart. Mario Vegetti (2003, 34) described this rupture, which he believes starts with Socrates, as the withdrawal of the philosopher/subject from the

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13 Saying that parameters and standards of judgment can undergo drastic changes is not trivial. Who would have thought that, in recent years, colleges in the United States North American would have cast doubt on Ludwig Wittgenstein's status as a real philosopher? And yet, if the rumours are to be believed, that is exactly what is happening. (Luigi Perissinotto, personal communication).

traditional values of the City. As a consequence of this break, the subject develops an "authentic 'I'" that "no longer coincides with the 'external,' socially recognizable subject". This fracture recalls Wittgenstein's thought on the limits of language, a thought that Hadot (2004, 23) interpreted in a 'Delphic' way:

> If he [i.e. Wittgenstein] insists so much on the limits of language, it is because after all he wants to allow a glimpse of a state of silent wisdom, attainable by those who have gone beyond the propositions of the *Tractatus*.

Therefore, the ancient philosopher is in the first place a subject who, saying 'I' in this hermetic way, makes reference to the act of singular enunciation. A philosopher is someone who says 'I' in this way, before anything philosophical has even been said.[14] One could say that ancient philosophers draw the attention of their fellow citizens to language itself, putting themselves in the position of *showing* (*Zeigen*) even before that of *saying* (*Sagen*). So that, independent of having written texts handed down to us as philosophical, we should begin our search for the style of ancient philosophical practice with the action of indicating oneself, of presenting oneself as an indexically relevant, separate person. The reference to saying 'I' (actually present in every expression of θεωρητικὸς βίος) reveals a polarity between the 'I' and the 'we' of the City; and it leads the subject of the enunciation to produce a form of life (εἶδος, or μορφὴ βίου) that will be increasingly bound up with a *discursive style*, likely manifest in speech or in a series of acts. Diogenes is a case in point.

2.2   Philosophical Agency as an Adverb Modification?

The break between subject and community and this new discursive style are clearly related to a distinction drawn by Pierre Hadot (1995) between *philosophical discourse* and genuine *philosophy*,[15] but the former doesn't overlap with the latter, as we will see. I'd like to make two observations on this topic, developing Hadot's intuition as it relates to the distinction that I will try to draw between acting and behaving and as it relates to the fact that something may provide evi-

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14   It seems correct to quote Hadot 1995, 45, who, about the Socratic dialogue, said: "In the Socratic dialogue, the question truly at stake is not what is being talked about, but who is doing the talking". See also Hadot 2004, 74-82. Some scholars see in the reference to the existential dimension of *Zeigen* a concern common to Wittgenstein's philosophy as well as to Heideggerian hermeneutics. See Gier 1981.

15   A polyphonic exploration of the meaning of ancient philosophy for moderns can be found in Andò, Cozzo 2002.

dence to determine when an action is philosophical. First, I'd like to note that Hadot's move has the virtue of discerning a relationship in ancient philosophy between a level of action and a level of conceptual discourse. As mentioned above, there are discourses that prior tradition has canonised as 'philosophical writings on language': some of Plato's dialogues, like *Cratylus*, *The Sophist*, and, especially, *Phaedrus*; the works of Aristotle collected in *The Organon*; and, later on, the Stoic writings on logic, of which accounts and fragments still exist. But there's a lot more than that. There is a *corpus* that can surely be classified as the manifestation of – shall we say – a philosophy of ancient language. But identifying a philosopher of ancient language's practice with his 'textualist' *côte* or *decontextualised* propositions is often insufficient and sometimes misleading: indeed, done light-heartedly, we'd be committing a fallacy that projected our concept onto that of the Greeks, as Frede earlier reminded us.[16]

We're looking for a criterion, not a literary canon. We're looking for forms of philosophical action, not some sort of verbal assertion that we can stick the label philosophy of language onto. To arrive at an answer requires analysing philosophical practice and a few concepts of a philosophy of action. It is philosophical action and how it differs from behaviour that we have chosen as a field of inquiry. And in this study, the boundaries and subdivisions between disciplines (moral philosophy, epistemology, philosophy of language) would only present obstacles to a correct understanding of the phenomena under examination. It's worth remembering what Donald Davidson wrote in a weighty article about the study of action in Aristotle:[17]

> The study of action, along with other contemporary seismic shifts, will continue to contribute to the breakdown of the administratively ordained boundaries between the various fields of philosophy. Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume and Kant, to pick a few winners, recognized no lines between metaphysics, epistemology, moral philosophy, psychology, philosophy of language, and the history of philosophy, and neither would we if our universities and colleges didn't often compel us to think of ourselves and our colleagues as belonging in one or another field. (Davidson 2005, 291)

One must first consider all of ancient philosophy, and not just a text, as a style, a τρόπος or a εἶδος of praxis of someone who is acting. Don-

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16 Similar conclusions, though through different perspectives are reached by Detienne 1967.

17 Davidson's interest in the logic of action is evidenced by a number of essays written over a long period of time (see the following note) and by his constant references to the treatment of action by a philosopher he greatly admired, Anscombe (1957). According to Davidson, it is the most important treatment of action since Aristotle.

ald Davidson might appreciate a formulation such as: *The philosophy of the ancients is what would introduce into the sentence describing the philosopher's action a type of adverbial modifier.*[18] Pursuing the metaphor further, this would be an adverbial modification of the action, describable in any language, even non-verbal language, as long as it is equipped with the expressive resources that permit the language to refer to an action. For convenience, we usually imagine such a reference as a matter of *denotation*: a proposition of language describes an action, shows its logical form, articulates its meaning. And yet nothing impedes us from considering the description of an action as performed using not a verbal sentence but the action itself (another or the same), just performed with a metalinguistic intention. It would involve choosing an exemplificational language instead of a denotational language. Exemplifying, as per Nelson Goodman's (1968, 59) studies, is to all effects a way of reference and is involved in a large number of symbolic practices connected to human gestural or praxic intentions.[19] If exemplification has not often been studied in depth, it is because it concerns more the signifier than the meaning of languages and symbolic systems.[20] It's worth mentioning that the notational poverty of gestural languages[21] – with the partial exception of artistic languages – is not an argument against the validity or possibility of developing a praxic logic to be applied to human action and its various forms of gestures. What else could the philosopher Epictetus have meant if not an adverbial modification when, turning to the young philosopher hanging on his words, he said:

> Remember that you are an actor in a play, the character of which is determined by the Playwright: if He wishes the play to be short,

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[18]   Of course, I refer to Davidson's well-known analysis of sentences containing verbs of action presented in Davidson 1980, 293 and 296. His idea is that "adverbial modification provides a lead for understanding what actions and events are" and consequently "adverbial clauses are correctly perceived as predicates of events". This analysis highlights the link between action, adverbs and ontological commitments.

[19]   Nelson Goodman 1968, 59, enumerates among the cases of exemplification the gestures of gym instructors or orchestra conductors, as well as the actions of mimes. For the American philosopher, exemplification is a mode of reference in which a sample refers to the label, or predicate, by which it is denoted in a given context. The major difference with denotation comes from the fact that what exemplifies in a given context must be something denoted by the predicate or label. An action can be completed to exemplify some of its traits. In that case "a symbol that denotes itself also exemplifies itself, is both denoted and exemplified by itself". See Goodman 1968, 59.

[20]   The dominant paradigm is a meaning-oriented one. On the marginalisation of the signifier-oriented theories of symbols, see for instance La Matina 2020.

[21]   Scholars such as Greimas, Koechlin, Fabbri, Rastier and others talk about this poverty in a collective work on action and its logic: Greimas 1968. Greimas 1968, 20, relates the relative poverty of studies on gestures to the theoretical difficulty of separating the sentence-level and the enunciation-level.

it is short; if long, it is long; if He wishes you to play the part of a beggar, remember to act even this rôle *adroitly*; and so if your rôle be that of a cripple, an official, or a layman. For this is to your business, play *admirably* the rôle assigned you; but the selection of that rôle is Another's. (Epict. *Encheiridion* 17)[22]

Like an actor in a play written by other people, the subject who lives according to philosophy is called on to play the role assigned to him adroitly and admirably. The contribution of his philosophical being is a *modal* contribution to the action, and nothing more.

2.3 Philosophising as an Intransitive Action

As a second point, I would like to turn my attention to another affirmation that strikes me as particularly significant to the present argument. In his first lesson at the *Collège de France* on February 18, 1983, Pierre Hadot (1995, 28) considered philosophising as a continuous act, a permanent act, to be identified with life: an act that must be renewed moment to moment. Let us linger briefly on this definition. Philosophising, he affirms, is a *continuum* and, at the same time, something that should be carried out again and again. Therefore, the features of philosophy that emerge are continuity and perishability: that which is continuous is continuous because it is incessantly performed. Continuity and perishability emerge as features of the philosophy. We are in the presence of two aspects of time, where philosophy is simultaneously tasked with creating a transit space or threshold that renders the motion of change constant and with measuring that change by dividing it into segments and, because it differentiates between segments, visible to the subject as a novelty that is given in its time.

We can picture the practice of the philosopher as the production of a constant split between a before and an after. Aristotle (*Phys.* 220a.25) defined time as "the number of motion in respect of before and after". Paraphrasing his definition, we can push ourselves to say that philosophy is the quality that measures the motion (splitting) of time that emerges in respect of a before and after of the subject who finds him or herself at the centre of the enunciation. If that is true, then philosophy is not 'done', like a ποιεῖν that produces an object; like a product. Instead, it acts, like a πράττειν that keeps producing a new subject, or rather, something new in the subject that acts. To make our case by adapting the words of Emile Benveniste, we could say that philosophising is more intransitive than transitive action: it sheds light on the subjectivity of the philosopher in a new and surprising way:

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[22] We quote from: Epictetus 1928, 479-80. Italics added.

> Ici le sujet est le lieu du procès [...] le sujet est centre en même temps qu'acteur du procès; il accomplit quelque chose qui s'accomplit en lui. (Benveniste 1966, 172)

According to my hypothesis, we must initially recognise that the process of the 'doings' of ancient philosophy takes place within a subject that says 'I'. That construction of the subject happens thanks to the reiteration of a particular act of enunciation, which generates a polarisation between an indifferent 'you' (the City) and the person who says 'I'; it thereby puts forward two differences: (a) a difference between the self and the City, where life is only behaviour; and (b) a difference between the earlier self and the self that is reborn with each simple act of saying 'I'. Saying, then, is really doing.

2.4 Attentiveness, or προσοχή: An Enunciation-Game

If what has been said thus far is plausible, then we can attribute to the act of philosophising among the ancients that which modern linguistics attributes to the act of enunciation: perishability (*semel-natif*). It will help to cite the passage we're referring to here, which comes from the theory of enunciation elaborated by Emile Benveniste (1971, 224):

> The 'subjectivity' we are discussing here is the capacity of the speaker to posit himself as 'subject'. [...] 'Ego' is he who says 'ego'. That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity', which is determined by the linguistic status of 'person'.

By saying that "'Ego' is he who says 'ego'", Beneviste removes the presence of the subject the moment he installs himself into the discourse. At the same time, if we're right, the ancient philosopher is someone who says 'I' while withdrawing from the polis. His relationship with language is not connected to the contents that he could write or has written; initially, it is the relationship of a speaker who constructs himself via a constant practice of commanding his enunciation. Thus constructed, subjectivity is, however, perishable. It demands constant upkeep, a continuous effort to stay within the bounds that the 'I' seeks to construct. Before staking out any propositions, the ancient philosopher must ensure he will have the floor and keep it. This explains why a philosophical life requires that the ancients carefully tend to their words, performing exercises to preserve the attentiveness of this 'I' and avoid unconsciously being swallowed up by the inauthenticity of a life based on mere behaving. The act of saying 'I' was what distinguished acting from behaving.

The Hellenistic period and, more so, the Imperial Age saw the flourishing of language games that we shall call games of attention

(*prosokhè-games*).[23] They introduced various linguistic formulas: πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ (pay attention to yourself), πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν (pay attention to something), πρόσεχε μή… (be careful not to…) and προσοχή (Beware!). There are significant nuances in the ways that modern languages translate the verb προσέχειν, in its various syntactical constructions: 'Be careful', 'Carefully observe yourself', 'Beware', 'Take care'. The point of the game is to take account of something, and it is encouraged in philosophical schools throughout the Hellenised Mediterranean. The Stoics, for example, practice them a lot. Mention is made of them by many authors. Epictetus and his disciple Arrian introduce these expressions over and over again or allude to them in important ways;[24] Marcus Aurelius, too, reminds himself to προσοχή; reference to taking such cares is present in the New Testament and in Latin authors like Seneca. According to Hadot, attention (προσοχή):

> is a continuous vigilance and presence of mind, self-consciousness which never sleeps, and a constant tension of the spirit. Thanks to this attitude, the philosopher is fully aware of what he does at each instant, and he wills his actions fully. (Hadot 1995, 84)

Arrian, who compiled the writings of his master Epictetus (Epict. *Dissert*. 4.1.1-12.5), speaks to this in a chapter titled Περὶ προσοχῆς. Firstly, he describes προσοχή as (a) an attitude that one cannot take up at will once it is lost (μὴ τοῦτο φαντάζου, ὅτι, ὁπόταν θέλῃς, ἀναλήψῃ αὐτήν); (b) which is hampered by behaviour (ἔθος τοῦ μὴ προσέχειν ἐγγίνεται); (c) and also delayed by behaviour (εἴωθας ὑπερτίθεσθαι ἀ[ι]εὶ δ' εἰς ἄλλον καὶ ἄλλον χρόνον); (d) that is rejected by habit (ἔθος τοῦ ἀναβάλλεσθαι τὴν προσοχήν). We find here a split between *behaviour* (ἔθος) and the *act* of attention (προσοχή), between everyday living and choosing to act. Based on these notations, we can imagine that the utterance of one of the aforementioned formulas – πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ, πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν, πρόσεχε μή – triggers an indexical activity, an act of positioning that in some cases was aimed at an element present in the context, but in other cases took up as a point of application the very action that the subject was performing. Games of attention were exercises used in philosophy schools to heighten sensitivity. This falls within our field inquiry, given that a philosopher like Charles W. Morris considered 'taking account of something' as the basis of the process that governs the function of signs, which he calls semiosis.

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23   I dealt with the topic of προσοχή in a seminar held at the Classics and Ancient History Department, at the University of Durham (3 March 2016), entitled *Paying Attention to Prosokhé: An Inquiry into Pagan and Christian Philosophy*.

24   On Epictetus' works see Dobbin 1998. On his discursive style see Wehner 2000.

The most effective characterization of a sign is the following: *S* is a sign of *D* for *I* to the degree that *I* takes account of *D* in virtue of the presence of *S*. Thus in semiosis something takes account of something else mediately, i.e., by means of a third something. (Morris 1938, 4)

In ancient philosophy taking account of 'something' becomes taking account of 'oneself'. The comparison gets at something relevant: προσοχή triggers a language game through which one thing takes into account something else, giving rise to a process of semiosis. Still, for the utterance "πρόσεχε!" (Be careful!) to achieve its desired effect, something has to function as a sign. But what? The texts we hope would provide us with an answer leave various possibilities open: Epictetus invites his disciples to construct, before an action, a kind of script (*Encheiridion* 4); Plutarch urges us to pay attention to the discourse of a sophist or philosopher, more than to their performance (*De recta ratione audiendi*, 37b); the author of the Life of Antony (*Vita Antonii*, 26.921.20 ff.) tells monks to write their own lives, in order "to be in the presence of themselves";[25] Philo of Alexandria refers to the faculty of learning from discourses (*De cherubim*, 102, line 2). There are plenty of similar examples. To categorise them, we could say that the game of attention has three segments:

1. *a trigger point* (the command given either by somebody else or to oneself: πρόσεχε!). This command can be expressed in language or by pointing;

2. *an application point*, in the region of "take care": in Greek Imperial philosophy, it is found in what depends on us (τὰ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῖν), especially psychism. Finally,

3. *an insurgence point* (what Nietzsche called *Entstehungspunkt*),[26] the conquest of the self by means of others; the introduction of a life that, although it has yet to take shape, will become the main content of the philosophy of the period.

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[25] Athanasius counterposes behaving (which is an unreflexive doing) and acting. For a behaviour to be assumed as an action by the subject, it must be able to be fixed in a written description. In this way – we can say – the doing is received by its subject from the outside. In Athanasius' words: Πολλάκις γὰρ καὶ ἑαυτοὺς, ἐν οἷς πράττομεν, λανθάνομεν· [...] Ἕκαστος τὰς πράξεις καὶ τὰ κινήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, ὡς μέλλοντες ἀλλήλοις ἀπαγγέλλειν, σημειώμεθα καὶ γράφωμεν. The expression 'being put into the presence of oneself' is a Michel Foucault's one. In Foucault (1983) the relation between language-games (as *parrhesia*) and truth is stressed.

[26] The notion of 'insurgence' (*Entstehung*) was elaborated by Friedrich Nietzsche in the field of his famous project focused on the *Genealogie der Moral* and was re-elaborated in a historical perspective by the theologian Franz Overbeck (1837-1905) in his framework for the study of the Church Fathers; see Overbeck 1996. On the Christian notion of προσοχή, see Basilii Caesarensis, Ὁμιλία εἰς τὸ Πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ, XXXI, 198C-217B Migne.

One could also say that προσοχή is a device that activates a space without filling it with contents. 'Beware!' – 'Of whom? Of what?' The order to pay attention deactivates one's surrounding circumstances, my familiarity with the space I am accustomed to. Customary things are replaced with their absence. And the subject stands at a remove from the self. To put quotation marks around the self is to deactivate it. Προσοχή produces a dystopic time, not the present. The philosophical exercise involves repeating (or listening to someone say) πρόσεχε! Beware! Pay attention! The game of attention produces the 'I' itself, which in one sense is there and in another is not there yet. Προσοχή is an invitation to build oneself by getting distance from what is customary. It is a threshold, a liminal space that must be crossed. As the great philosopher Gregory of Nyssa (*De Vita Moysis* 2.34) will go on to say, the 'I' presented with itself, but brought by others, can pay attention to itself and know itself as if it were self-generated. This birth is not a natural process; it doesn't spring from nature (from φύσις), which is estranged from the dominion of the self and has no philosophical content. Instead, this birth is generated by a voluntary impulse (τὸ δὲ οὕτως γεννᾶσθαι οὐκ ἐξ ἀλλοτρίας ἐστιν ὁρμῆς […] ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ προαιρέσεως). This way, only by applying our attention, we father ourselves (ἐσμεν ἑαυτῶν […] πατέρες).[27]

3 Conclusions

To conclude, briefly: we have tried to jettison the belief that an agreement or relationship between the ancients and moderns can be established on the propositional contents of some pivotal philosophical texts alone. Taking a cue from Frede and another from Hadot, we have shifted the attention from the sentence level to the enunciation level. There's no doubt that, if we linger on the former, it is hard to find a complete and autonomous 'philosophy of language' among the ancient Greeks. But if we investigate the process of enunciation, we note a germinal act (the act of paying attention, of noting, of presenting oneself as an I that says 'I') that characterises the work of the philosopher as a 'doing' or practice and saves him from lapsing into mere behaviour, ever obsequious to the *idola tribus* – as seems to be happening in some parts of the overcrowded academic world.

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27 See *Vita Moys.* 2.34.11.

3.1 Philosophising in a New Age of Anxiety

We aren't proposing rules or paradigms, except to refer to a philosophical style that we consider still feasible: philosophy as a way of life, or a form of it. It should be clear that talking about a philosophy of an ancient Greek philosophy of language means speaking of a form of life and not merely of a corpus of texts; it is expedient to quote here Wittgenstein who, while rejecting Russell's (1914) distinction between *hard* and *soft* data,[28] argued that "What has to be accepted, the given, is – one might say – *forms of life*" (Wittgenstein 1953, *PU* II.XI). This is not about building a totem but about utilising linguistic and semiotic resources to return modern philosophising to its origins. For us, these origins are a fundamental game for every branch of philosophy: to take account of 'something'. A game that places the subject in his own practice and thereby positions him to grasp himself externally through the reference to a sign, to a trigger, which prompts him to react, to reawaken, to sever himself from the *Uneigentlichkeit* (inauthenticity) of the social world. Schools of philosophy in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods offered a few ideas, which there was not room here to elaborate on. In the eyes of the subject the world changes its appearance. To paraphrase Wittgenstein again, we could say that the real 'given' for having a philosophy as an action (and not as a mere behaviour) is finding a form of life capable of constituting itself as a discourse and a *logos*. In ancient times philosophy is always oneself life. Thus, one would conclude, there is a way to make sense of Wittgenstein's saying in this context as well, by saying that the limits of someone's βίος mean the limits of their λόγος.

However, by now the only limits I can see are those of the present paper, which has only been able to hint at certain issues that will have to be developed and dissected later. Indeed, approaching theoretically this digging out requires much more extensive work than that carried out so far. We know that Hellenistic and imperial philosophical schools offer many more data than the ones mentioned here. In a future rethinking of ancient philosophy – taken as an action and as a mode of enunciation – the study of Greek patristics should play an important part. The Greek fathers used and described προσοχή-games, organising them, and even integrating them into liturgical life[29] (think of imitation in mystagogy). It is no surprise that, especially in the fourth century, Greek Patristics envisioned a phil-

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28 Author's Italics. On this point I am obliged to Perissinotto 2002, XV.

29 For an attempt of analytic approach see, for instance, La Matina 2015. As to the historical and philosophical context see Dodds 1965. On the practice of language-games in Christendom see, e.g., Locker 2009.

osophical exercise that not only could trigger the making of a philo-sophical life, but a powerful instrument that ensured that this new subjectivity was generated through the mediation of Biblical stories. The biblical narratives, reinterpreted in the context of Eastern mista-gogy, are listened to as if they contained – as, for instance, a Greek fa-ther expresses – (Greg. Nyss. *In Cant.* 756.5 M) "a philosophy hidden in words" (τὴν ἐγκεκρυμμένην τοῖς ῥητοῖς φιλοσοφίαν).[30] These sto-ries (ἱστορικὰ διηγήματα) do not matter for their denotative content, but because they describe actions that the scholar of philosophy will have to transcribe (μεταγράφειν) in his own life.[31] Such a transcrip-tion realises the transition from the third-person narrative (μῦθος) to the first-person life (βίος), as well as from a *wortbar*-language to a wordless language. This latter is prompted by the philosophi-cal approach to the unsayable (ὁ λόγος [...] δι᾽ἀπορρήτων φιλοσοφεῖ: *In Cant.* 772M; GNO 6.23.14). In Gregory's terms, a true philosophy lies in the transition from *the other's life* (the life of Moses, of Christ) to the *one's own life*. Let me quote a significant passage:

> These things, o Caesarius man of God, on the perfection of the virtuous life [περὶ τῆς τοῦ βίου τοῦ κατ᾽ ἀρετὴν τελειότητος] sug-gests [ὑποτίθεται] our brief discourse; setting [ὑπογράψας] Mo-ses' life before you as a model [πρωτότυπον] in the form of beauty, so that each of us, through the imitation of any convenient aspect, may transcribe in himself [ἐν ἑαυτοῖς μεταγράφειν] the charac-ter [τὸν χαρακτῆρα] of the shown beauty. (Greg. Nyss. *Vita Moys.* 2.143.19-144.3)

3.2 Gregory of Nyssa's *De Vita Moysis*

Similar remarks could be found extensively in the patristic literature. This means that Bible narratives are usually interpreted by the fa-thers as lives the subject should receive from the outside: the pro-claimed sacred texts are signs that trigger new lives. The most in-teresting philosophers in this respect are the Cappadocian fathers: Basil of Caesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Na-zianzus, three philosophers educated in pagan philosophy who were able to reframe many questions in light of their Christian vision of language.[32] This article can touch on just the following aspect of their account. In the interpretation of the Biblical stories and characters,

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30 See the parallel formulation in Greg. Nyss. *In Cant.* 6.3.5: ὥστε διὰ τῆς καταλλήλου θεωρίας φανερωθῆναι τὴν ἐγκεκρυμμένην τοῖς ῥητοῖς φιλοσοφίαν.

31 Another parallel passage is in *In Cant.* 6.6.5-8.

32 For more on this philosophical position of Gregory's, see La Matina 2010.

the Cappadocians emphasise a notion of philosophy that stands as the dividing line between two ways of reading the Scripture. The facts narrated, they say, may be either true ἱστορικῶς (i.e., denotationally) or true τυπικῶς (that is, exemplificationally).[33] In the first, the biblical sentences are true to the facts, while in the second reading they are true a different way.

For example, no listeners of Gregory's *De Vita Moysis* (*Vita Moys.* 1.6.8-14) could choose to live the life of Moses: there are no Pharaohs or Chaldeans or golden calves in the fourth century. Then, how to imitate the life of Moses and achieve perfection,[34] provided that this is the primary philosophical task for the fathers? Gregory encourages to pay attention (προσέχειν) rather to the truth conditions than to the meaning of text.[35] Truth is not only a matter of fact, for God might speak every time to everybody listening to Him. Accordingly, if truth does not belong only to the past times, then the *Bible* sentences admit of a supplement of effectiveness. It is in this sense that Gregory exhorts his listeners "to make Moses a sample of life": Μωϋσῆς τοίνυν ἡμῖν εἰς ὑπόδειγμα βίου προτεθήτω τῷ λόγῳ. *Vita Moys.* 1.6.24-5). Exhortation like this do prompt each listener to play the attentiveness-game.[36] The προσοχή is used to replace the third person (the person ἱστορικῶς) by the first one. Now, translating these notions into a language close to modern philosophy, one could say that the ancient listener is somehow requested of removing the historical names from the story and filling in the blanks in the predicates by using their own proper noun. Each of them can thus become another Moses.

Besides, didn't Aristotle say in *Poetics* that, when one reads the life of, say, Alcibiades, it is not what happens to Alcibiades that is philosophical, but the possibility of converting Alcibiades' actions into actions that can be performed by those of us listening to them at the theatre or reading them on our own? To act ἱστορικῶς and to act τυπικῶς: the kind of philosophy that we're looking for requires a semantic explanation of action, and maybe that explanation, too, is hidden between adverbs and games like these.

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33 See Greg. *In Cant.* 6.6.5-8. The origin of the ἱστορικῶς vs τυπικῶς dichotomy is in St Pauls' *1 Cor* 10.11.

34 Here you are the paradoxical condition of the listeners: they are invited to (but do not really can) imitate the perfect life. See e.g. *Vita Moys.* 1.6.4 (πῶς μιμήσωμαι;) and also 2.47.5 ff. (ἀδύνατον δι'αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων [...] μιμήσασθαι).

35 See e.g. *Vita Moys.* 1.2.22-3.

36 See again at the end of *Vita Moys.* 2.144.17-20: ὥρα σοι [...] πρὸς τὸ ὑπόδειγμα βλέπειν [...] ἐπὶ τὸν ἴδιον μεταφέροντα βίον.

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The Efficacy of True Speech
Gorgias Between Rorty and Foucault

Mauro Serra
Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italia

Abstract   According to a widespread interpretation, in Gorgias' philosophy of language there is no room for truth at all. The only aim of logos for him would be effective persuasion and speech would be constrained by nothing but persuasiveness itself. Referring to Encomium of Helen, I try to point out, however, that in Gorgias there is an attempt to investigate the complex relationship between truth and efficacy in the functioning of language. I also suggest that, seen from this perspective, Gorgias' conception of truth shows significant points of contact with Rorty's and, above all, Foucault's thinking.

Keywords   Truth. Efficacy. Belief. Rorty. Foucault.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 A Behavioural Interpretation?. – 3 Archaic Background. – 4 Going Back to the Text. – 5 An Unorthodox Perspective. – 6 In the Wake of the Moderns: Gorgias Between Rorty and Foucault.

1   Introduction

It is widely held that, in Gorgias' thought and in particular in his *Encomium*, there is no room for truth at all. In a way that does not differ from the testament of Plato himself in the *Gorgias* and in a well-known passage of the *Phaedrus* (273a-b), the Sicilian sophist could be thus considered (together with Protagoras) the leading figure of a vast group of intellectuals, the sophists, who, without constituting a school, can nevertheless be at least partially united since "das [*doxa*] haben sie auf den Thron der Wahrheit gesetzt" (Bröcker 1958, 438). The lack of interest in truth mentioned by Plato would correspond to the predominant role attributed instead to the persuasion. The only aim of *logos*, in this perspective, would be effective persuasion; speech would be constrained by nothing but persuasiveness itself. In the following paper I will try to point out that this line of interpretation of Gorgias' thought is decidedly wrong. In contrast to what is usually claimed, in Gorgias there is, in fact, an attempt to investigate the complex relationship between truth and efficacy in the functioning of language. It is a question that is still relevant in the current debate, as I will try to suggest in the last part of the paper. In particular, I will refer briefly to the thought of Rorty and Foucault, as both authors, albeit in different way, place this relationship in a political framework.

Before starting, however, a methodological point. I will not take into account all the surviving Gorgianic texts or attempt to offer a holistic interpretation of his thought about truth.[1] Although I am convinced that such an interpretation is possible, I will postpone it to another occasion.[2] For the moment I will limit myself to a close (al-

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[1]   For examples of this holistic perspective, see McComiskey 1997 and Bermudez 2017, and, with a thoroughly epistemological perspective, Di Iulio (forthcoming), which is the best example in my opinion.

[2]   I add here a short answer to a question raised by one of my referees who writes: «it is very difficult to establish a general thesis on Gorgias theory of *logos* and persuasion, without examining the epistemological and linguistic theses of Gorgias Treatise *On Not-Being or On Nature* [...]. For it could be that the cases of the truth vocabulary discussed by the author in the *Encomium of Helen* do not have the theorical profound implications that could be expected from a more technical treatment such as the epistemological issues explained in the Treatise *On Not-Being or Nature»*. On the one hand, it is a fair objection that I could only have answered by writing a much longer essay than was possible. On the other, to put it in a nutshell, I think there is a complementary relationship between *On Not-Being or On Nature* and Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen*, with the former aiming to show that an ontological foundation of truth is not possible and the latter aiming to show the political, and intersubjective, I would say anachronistically, nature of the concept of truth. From this perspective, I think that my interpretation basically agrees with the seminal work of Barbara Cassin 1995 but with a difference that seems decisive to me. Whereas Cassin emphasises the 'poietic' and creative action of the *logos* and does not have a precise place for truth in her interpretation of Gorgias' thought, in my own reading the concept of truth is placed in a tragic and ago-

beit necessarily partial) reading of *Encomium of Helen*, since, in my opinion, it can be considered to be the sophist's manifesto of his ideas about speech.[3]

2   A Behavioural Interpretation?

My first step will be a brief consideration of Mourelatos' interpretation (1987). Although it was a widely held idea, the thesis that truth and efficacy are starkly opposed in Gorgias' thought finds its most philosophically sophisticated and challenging form in Mourelatos' paper. Moreover, the difficulties this interpretation faces offer a good example of the general problems of this kind of reading, particularly in reference to *Encomium of Helen*. According to Mourelatos, it is possible to distinguish in Gorgias' philosophy of language two different but complementary parts. In the treatise *On Not-Being or On Nature*, we find the *pars destruens*. In its third section, in fact, Gorgias puts forward several arguments for the claim that one cannot communicate one's knowledge to another. According to the first argument, since speech and objects belong to different ontological categories, it is impossible for an element of one category to be known through an element of the other. Another argument is based instead on perceptual differences: it is impossible that two different subjects have the same perceptual experience or mental image of a given object. Another version of the argument is referred to the same subject, who cannot have the same experience through different senses or at different times. The logical consequence of all these arguments, and the final conclusion of the *Treatise*, is that communication is impossible. The aim of *On Not-Being or On Nature*'s arguments is, according to Mourelatos, an attack on specific conceptions of linguistic meaning. The argument from category is directed against the assumption that the meaning of all words is constituted by their reference; the puzzle of perceptual sameness, instead, would have as its target a mentalist interpretation of linguistic meaning, i.e. a conception according to which

> the hearing of a word 'W' brings to the mind of each speaker of a certain language the same mental image or thought and that conversely when either that same mental image or thought or the cor-

responding sense impression should occur to the speaker, the perception can be conveyed to others through use of the word 'W'. (Mourelatos 1987, 151)

This would not be, however, Gorgias' final word. In *Encomium of Helen*, we find in fact the *pars construens* of his theory. In the central part of the text, Gorgias puts forward a behavioural conception of meaning. On this conception, the function of speech does not consist in communicating anything at all, but in arousing stimulus and responses so that speech can be perfectly defined in terms of its persuasiveness without any whatsoever reference to its truth value. Actually, at first sight, *Encomium of Helen* seems to offer substantive evidence for a behavioural picture. In *Hel.* 8, Gorgias defines *logos* as *mega dynastês* and makes claims about its power to accomplish the most divine deeds; in *Hel.* 9, where Gorgias is speaking about poetry, *logoi* are said to be able to substitute actual experiences and elicit the same behavioural (i.e. emotional) effects as such experiences. Finally, in *Hel.* 14, we find the widely known analogy between *logoi* and *pharmaka*, through which *logos*' action on the human soul is compared to the material action of medicine or drugs that "draw out different humours from the body" (*allous chymous ek tou sômatos exagei*). Notwithstanding that, however, Mourelatos' interpretation faces three major difficulties. The first is methodological. His interpretation is, in fact, based only on the central part of the *Encomium of Helen* (*Hel.* 8-14) that was extrapolated as being an autonomous text. Although I agree that we find authentic Gorgianic ideas expressed in this part of the text, I think that they need to be understood in the context of the whole text if we want to avoid drawing at misleading conclusions. Moreover, the analysis of the central part is not without its difficulties. One of these has already been raised, in a slightly different manner, by Bermudez (2017) and Di Iulio (forthcoming). In both *Hel.* 11 and 13, Gorgias seems to speak against the identification of truth and persuasion or efficacy. In par. 11 he plainly admits the possibility of false speeches, implying

> the existence of a norm that determines the falsehood of speeches independently of their persuasive success, a norm that seems to be closely related to a distinction between opinion and knowledge. (Bermudez 2017, 7)

In par. 13, however, he claims that persuasion (together with pleasure) is the effect of a *logos* "written according to the technique, but not said according to truth", signifying that one can be persuaded by speeches which are not communicating truth. Persuasion (and pleasure) can therefore occur even where there is no room for truth. There is then another difficulty, which seems to me really decisive in re-

jecting Mourelatos' interpretation. In the examples of *Hel.* 13 where the efficacy of persuasion is mostly underlined, we find a series of activities and contexts that revolve around rational argumentation. Indeed, we could say that all the contexts involving rationality that might spring to the mind of a fifth century Greek are recalled here. What is most important, however, is the fact that in these cases Gorgias' explanation of the efficacy of *logos* – i.e. of its persuasiveness – is centred on the pivotal role of the *doxa*. *Doxa* is a word that is notoriously difficult to translate,[4] but, whatever the meaning one wants to give it, it implies a reference to a psychological or mental process. Its use seems therefore decidedly at odds with behaviourism, a doctrine that is strongly committed to the truth of the following claim:

> Behavior can be described and explained without making ultimate reference to mental events or to internal psychological processes. The sources of behavior are external (in the environment), not internal (in the mind, in the head). (Graham 2019, par. 1)

Moreover, Gorgias' use of the word seems to be significantly complex and not casual, since "at least three possible meanings of *doxa* and its cognates may be distinguished in the work" (Futter 2011, 4). Let us we take for example what he says in *Hel.* 11, preparing the ground for subsequent examples of persuasive speech: "most people on most subjects furnish themselves with *doxa* as advisor (*symboulos*) to the soul. But belief, being slippery and unsteady, surrounds those who rely on it with slippery and unsteady successes". According to the most natural reading of this passage, *doxa* can be understood as a faculty of judgement whose role is to give advice for action to the soul, which in turn can be roughly compared to what is for us moderns the 'mind'. It is quite evident that we are in a decidedly non-behaviourist landscape. Nor are things better if we take into account the first of the three examples of *Hel.* 13, where Gorgias says that: "the discourses of the natural scientists [...] setting aside one belief and building up another in its stead make incredible and obscure things apparent to the eyes of belief". As Roberto Velardi conclusively pointed out several years ago, a striking comparison with Herodotus' description of the ancient debate around the explanation of Nile's floods allows

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4   It is generally translated as 'opinion' or as 'belief'. Recently, however, Moss and Schwab (2019, 1-32) have persuasively argued that *doxa* is not the word corresponding to what we moderns mean by 'belief'. This would rather apply to *hypolepsis*. Since, however, "the common element in *doxa*, knowledge, and practical wisdom that makes them all count as *hypolepseis* is conviction or taking to be true" (Moss, Schwab 2019, 23), I think that in the context of my argument about Gorgias I can continue to use 'belief', which I prefer to 'opinion' due to the derogatory meaning it generally assumes.

us to give to the word *doxa* in this context the meaning of 'scientific theory' (Velardi 2001, 16, 52-3).[5] In this case too, therefore, it is really difficult to understand how a behavioural framework could account for what Gorgias is saying.[6]

3 Archaic Background

Although, in my opinion, Gorgias' thought can usefully be compared with modern philosophical reflection, I think that we could better understand what is at stake in his *Encomium of Helen*, starting from framing it in the socio-cultural context to which it belongs. In this perspective is always useful to make reference to the classical work of Marcel Detienne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* (1996). According to Detienne's reconstruction, of which here I give a very concise summary, in the Greek archaic age, three types of discourses – poetic praise, prophecy, and judgment – were set apart from the quotidian not only because of their common divine origin, but also because of their power over the human world, as words that 'realise' things, in the sense of making them real. This is the province of 'efficacious' speech, where it is not possible to draw a dividing line between truth and efficacy. However, the truth of these magico-religious words was not without its ambiguity: both the words of the Muses and mantic speech could mislead humans, for whom the masters of truth could become 'masters of deception'. In any case, and most importantly, the ability to distinguish between reality and deception is expressly connected with divinity. In attempting to reconstruct the historical evolution of the idea of truth in Greece, Detienne shows how this ambiguous relationship between truth and deception was gradually replaced by the requirement of non-contradiction. He outlines the process of the secularisation of magico-religious speech and the development of its dialogic form, which took place in the classical period in connection with the transformation of the socio-political organisation and the progressive development of democracy. It is in this changing context that a fundamental question emerges, as Detienne himself says in a later work, where he returns to the "masters of truth":

> What place do the sophist and the philosopher occupy in the line-

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[5] I leave aside a detailed interpretation of the metaphorical expression 'eyes of belief', limiting myself to pointing out that it seems roughly equivalent to our expression 'eyes of the mind'.

[6] Mourelatos' explanation, appealing to "the thorny problem of the semantics of theoretical term" (1987, 157), seems to me not only decidedly anachronistic, but also totally off the mark.

age of the "Masters of Truth"? How does their speech differ from the efficacious speech that conveys reality of the diviner, the poet and the king of justice? How does the transition occur between one type of thought, marked by ambiguity and the particular logic that goes with it, to another kind of thought in which argumentation, the principle of non-contradiction, and dialogue, with its distinctions between the sense and the reference of propositions, all seem to herald the advent of a new intellectual regime? (Detienne 2007, 62)

To this question Detienne offers an answer that adopts a classification whose essential features were established by Plato, distinguishing completely the paths of the sophist and the philosopher. On the one hand, for sophists and orators for whom truth has no place, discourse is an instrument but not a way to know reality: *logos* is powerful but not a signifier pointing to a signified (Detienne 1996, 118). On the other hand, however, are the members of philosophical and religious sects (first of all, Pythagoreans), who "adopted procedure and modes of thought that directly prolonged earlier religious thought" (Detienne 1996, 120) and claimed the possession of a Truth not to be bartered and only to be handed down from master to disciple. And those we are used to calling philosophers are the heirs of this tradition since, even if

> between Epimenides of Crete and Parmenides of Elea, between the ecstatic magus and the philosopher of Being, the gap seems unbridgeable, a network of affinities links them on a whole series of points centred around *Alêtheia*. (Detienne 1996, 130)[7]

It is quite evident that, apart from modern jargon, Detienne's interpretation of sophists, and Gorgias in particular,[8] is basically the same as that advanced by Mourelatos. There is, however, an important difference: clarifying the background from which Gorgias' thought would be developed, it allows us to glimpse a different interpretative path. What if Gorgias had tried to outline a conceptual frame-

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[7] As Pierre Vidal Naquet observed in his foreword to Detienne's work: "In some sense, Detienne's aim is to write a prehistory of Parmenides' poem" (Vidal Naquet 1996, 9).

[8] See Detienne 1996, 118: "In this type of speech there was no distance between words and things. For Gorgias, who drew his ultimate conclusions from this notion, discourse *did not reveal the things it touched upon* and had nothing to communicate. In fact, *it was impossible for discourse to constitute communication with others*. It was "a great lord with a tiny, invisible body" curiously resembling the infant Hermes of the Homeric Hymn, the child with a magic wand (given to him by Apollo to control the flocks) who becomes *an instrument of persuasion or 'psychagogia'*" (emphasis added).

work capable of accounting for the archaic identification between truth and efficacy in a radically different socio-political context due to the birth of democracy?[9]

4   Going Back to the Text

To try to find an answer to the concluding question of the previous paragraph, I will start by analysing the *Encomium*'s passages where we find the Greek word for 'truth'. Gorgias uses this word three times, first in the opening of the text. Here he emphatically says:

> The perfect order (*kosmos*) proper to a city-state is excellence of its men; to a body, beauty; to a soul, wisdom; to an action, excellence; and to a discourse, truth (*logôi alêtheia*) – and the opposites of these are disorder. And the praiseworthy man and woman and discourse and deed and city-state and action one must honour with praise, while one must assign blame to the unworthy – for it is equal error and ignorance to blame the praiseworthy and to praise the blameworthy. (*Hel.* 1)

Leaving to one side numerous questions regarding the translation,[10] two points should be underlined. On the one hand, it is a very general statement that highlights a strong relationship between speech and truth, on the other, this relationship is brought back within an archaic framework, in which the aim of speeches is traditionally identified through the conceptual categories of 'praise' and 'blame'. In this way, the normative value of the statement, i.e. speeches should communicate truth, can be reformulated through the opposition praise *vs* blame so that "to blame the praiseworthy and to praise the blameworthy" is equivalent to speaking falsely.

The second occurrence of the word 'truth' is found in the second paragraph, which can be considered the natural consequence and the application of the general framework to the case of Helen. Here is the text:

> It being required of the same man both to speak straight and to

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9   Regardless of Gorgias' political orientation, which is difficult to establish, it should be remembered that "during the middle decades of the fifth century, the time when Gorgias was presumably beginning to develop his talents and reputation, the cities he dwelled in and travelled to were democratically governed" (Robinson 2007, 115). The cities Robinson refers to are Leontini, Acragas, and Syracuse.

10   The most important is about the proper meaning of the word '*kosmos*'. Elsewhere I have tried to show that Gorgias' use of the word is an intertextual quotation alluding to the Homeric expression *kata kosmon* (Serra 2012).

refute [crooked speech, one should refute] those blaming Helen, a woman concerning whom the testimony of those who are called poets has become univocal and unanimous – likewise the repute of her name, which has become a byword for calamities. And by bestowing some argument (*logismon*) on the speech, I myself wish to absolve this ill-reputed woman from responsibility, and to demonstrate that those who blame her are speaking falsely – and, having shown the truth, to put an end to ignorance. (*Hel*. 2)

In line with what was said in *Hel*. 1, the correctness of the speech referring to Helen consists in refuting those who traditionally blamed her in such a way as to restore the right relationship between 'praise' and 'praiseworthy'. What is most important, however, is that in this way the relationship between truth and *logos* is not about speech in general but about Gorgias' speech. Gorgias can thus frame this relationship in a clearly methodological claim. According to this claim, which coincides with the task of Gorgias' speech, 'to show the truth', 'to demonstrate that those who blame her are speaking falsely', and 'to put an end to ignorance' are different ways of referring to the same action, which can in turn be achieved by bestowing some argument (*logismos*) on the speech.

Let us now move to the third and final occurrence of the word, which is found in the central part of the text connected with the second of the three examples of *logos* used by Gorgias to illustrate its irresistible persuasive power. Here, Gorgias speaks of the speeches pronounced in an agonistic context (forensic or political) that are persuasive: "written according to the technique, but not said according to truth" (*Hel*. 13). Regardless of the value attributed to participial clause (causal or hypothetic), it is evident that in this case there is no relationship between *logos* and truth and, above all, that there is, however, a clear-cut distinction between truth and persuasion. Since one can be delighted and persuaded by speeches that are not communicating truth, persuasion can occur even when there is no room for truth (and this is what often happens).

We are now in a position to draw some partial conclusions. At first sight, Detienne's and Mourelatos's interpretation would seem to be confirmed. In introducing a stark distinction between truth and persuasion (or efficacy), Gorgias would be breaking away from the previous archaic tradition and would be laying the foundations for the birth of a new discipline, rhetoric, interested only in persuasion and not in truth. This interpretation, however, as we have already seen, is based on a serious methodological mistake, since both Mourelatos and Detienne, albeit in different way, take into account only the central part of the text, arbitrarily deciding not to consider the remaining parts at all, particularly the opening sections that contain two important occurrences of the term 'truth'. Taking into account

all the text, the picture becomes much more problematic. In a certain sense we are in fact apparently forced to choose which the authentically Gorgianic position is between two different possibilities: is the sophist claiming the truthfulness of his speech in opposition to the examples of the central part? Or is it rather in the long description of the *logos*' persuasive power that we find his ideas about the functioning of speech expressed? Both options are variously attested to in the secondary literature, but I don't have the space here for a detailed analysis of them, which would require another paper. I limit myself to observing that, to the best of my knowledge, I have not found any (convincing) attempt to show that the two parts of *Encomium* are not really in opposition but are instead complementary. This is the aim of the second part of my paper.

5 An Unorthodox Perspective

Although the relationship between truth and persuasion is probably the *Encomium*'s main theme, to properly understand what is at stake in this text we would need an overall interpretation that takes into account several other elements, such as the role of *doxa*, the correct meaning of *logismos*, the identification between persuasion and compulsion and so on. Not being able to develop such an interpretation here, I will proceed in a somewhat unorthodox way. I will introduce a Platonic passage which seems to me to provide the best interpretation of what Gorgias is saying. Starting from this passage, I will then try to outline the specificity of the Gorgianic position as far as it concerns the relationship between truth and persuasion. I am aware of the fact that this way of proceeding is both unorthodox and risky – above all because the Platonic passage, taken from the last part of *Theaetetus*, is itself the subject of considerable disagreement between scholars. Notwithstanding that, I think that is a fruitful path to be explored. Let us turn now to this passage of *Theaetetus*. We are at the end of the second part of the dialogue where Socrates is aiming to show that knowledge is not identical with true belief. In order to reach such a conclusion, he introduces the case of a jury as a counter-example.

> Socrates: Well, then, this at least calls for slight investigation; for you have a whole profession which declares that true opinion is not knowledge.
> Theaetetus: How so? What profession is it?
> Socrates: The profession of those who are greatest in wisdom, who are called orators and lawyers (*rhêtoras kai dikanikous*); for they persuade men by the art which they possess (*peithousin têi technêi*), not teaching them (*ou didaskontes*), but making

them have whatever opinion they like (*alla doxasein poiountes*). Or do you think there are any teachers so clever as to be able, in the short time allowed by the water-clock, [201b] satisfactorily to teach the judges the truth about what happened (*tôn genomenôn tên alêtheian*) to people who have been robbed of their money or have suffered other acts of violence, when there were no eyewitnesses?

Theaetetus: I certainly do not think so; but I think they can persuade them.

Socrates: And persuading them (*to peisai*) is making them have an opinion (*doxasai poiêsai*), is it not?

Theaetetus: Of course.

Socrates: Then when judges are justly persuaded (*dikaiôs peisthôsin*) about matters which one can know only by having seen them (*idonti monon estin eidenai*) and in no other way, in such a case, judging of them from hearsay (*ex akoêi krinontes*), having acquired a true opinion of them (*alêthê doxan*), [201c] they have judged without knowledge (*aneu epistêmês*), though they are rightly persuaded (*ortha peisthentes*), if the judgement they have passed is correct (*eiper eu edikasan*), have they not?

(Plato, *Theaetetus*, 201a5-c2, transl. Fowler)

According to a close literal reading of the passage, these are the main steps of Socrates' argument:

1.   only an eyewitness (*idonti*) can possess knowledge;
2.   this knowledge amounts to the truth about what happened (*tôn genomenôn tên alêtheian*);
3.   there is a straight connection between *doxa* and persuasion so that 'to persuade' (*to peisai*) is identical 'to producing conviction' (*doxasai poiêsai*) in the person who is being persuaded;
4.   *doxa* resulting from persuasion can be true or false so that, if the judgement the jurors have passed is correct, they have acquired a true belief (*alêthê doxan*);
5.   true belief, however, is not identical with knowledge (*aneu epistêmês*). Two points seem to me to be really decisive to clarify Gorgias' thought.

On the one hand, the stark connection between *doxa* and persuasion, i.e. the fact that whenever we have *doxa* our epistemological status is unavoidably concerned with persuasion, does not necessarily imply that there is no room for truth at all, since *doxa* can be both true and false. In other words, we, as Socrates does, can provide a picture in which *doxa* and truth are not mutually exclusive. On the other hand, however, there is a cognitive condition, knowledge, that is not only superior to *doxa*, but whose acquisition does not depend on speech (*logos*). The picture that emerges from the intertwining of the

two points seems to me to fit perfectly with what Gorgias is saying in his *Encomium of Helen*. I don't think there is any need to insist on the connection between *doxa* and persuasion since it is an all too evident fact (in particular in reference to *Hel.* 13). What is, however, most important is that for Gorgias too *doxa* is a second best that men are forced to rely on, because they are unable to acquire knowledge. In *Hel.* 11, he claims, in fact, that given men's difficulty in remembering the past, investigating the present and foreseeing the future, "most people on most subjects furnish themselves with *doxa* as advisor (*symboulos*) to the soul". They are obliged to rely on the *doxa* as a guide even if it is unsure and unstable and it is not by chance that the uncertain and unstable nature of the *doxa* determines the uncertainty and instability of the fate of those who rely on it, as Gorgias strongly underlines. It is important to notice that, even if Gorgias states that acquiring memory of the past, insight into the present and prediction of the future is difficult but not impossible, in reality the formulation used seems to suggest that *doxa*, even with its fragility, is the only faculty available to men. True, in this context Gorgias doesn't use the word 'knowledge' and does not insist on the fact that knowledge is independent from speech. The formulation adopted, however, takes up the expression through which, in the archaic poetical tradition, the holistic knowledge ascribed to the Muses and dispensed by them to inspired poets and prophets is understood. And this knowledge, as is widely known, has a direct and autoptic nature, depending on the Muses' ability to see everything. According to this framework, then, in Gorgias too there are two kinds of intellectual cognition, the weaker of which cannot but make use of speeches, and is therefore necessarily connected to *doxa* and persuasion. In this case too, however, there is room for truth, since the fact that persuasion has occurred will be expressed in a truth-judgement that in turn could be truth or false. In this perspective it is entirely reasonable to say that *logos* aims at truth both in general, as Gorgias does in *Hel.* 1, and in reference to his particular speech about Helen (*Hel.* 2). The aforementioned distinction between two different kinds of intellectual cognition, however, determines two equally inevitable consequences whose misunderstanding has, in my opinion, compromised the understanding of Gorgias' thought. On the one hand, while it is reasonable to say that *logos* aims at truth, we must not forget that *logoi* can provide us only with truth but not with certainty. On the other hand, the lack of certainty allows us to say in equally reasonable way that every truth amounts to a belief and that they are actually two sides of the same coin. To reformulate the Gorgianic insight slightly, we could then say that truth has a dialectical character and that any belief remains true until it is refuted. According to my interpretation, then, what we find in *Encomium of Helen* is a generalisation of a conceptual framework, which seems particularly relevant

in the case of a jury, but which Gorgias thinks to be useful in characterising in a very general way the action of *logos*. In this framework, efficacy is identified with persuasion, which in turn depends on *logos*' capacity to take into account a series of data or a previous belief to arrive at the formulation of a judgment that has a character of plausibility greater than the refuted one. Not coincidentally, Gorgias uses two very 'technical' terms to define this kind of action applying them first of all to his own speech: *logismos* and *eikos*. With first, still rare term in the last quarter of the fifth century B.C., he indicates the logical-argumentative procedure through which *logos* gives shape to a belief, which, as in the first example of *Hel.* 13, can be a real scientific theory. The second,[11] however, is used to highlight how the awareness of the difficulty (or better, the impossibility) of reaching a definitive truth, does not necessarily imply the adoption of a radically sceptical position and, at the same time, safeguards us from the risk of unconditional trust (in turn no less dangerous) in others' beliefs. Although my interpretation of Gorgias' line of reasoning is necessarily schematic, there is at least one possible objection to this reconstruction that I need to take into account. In *Hel.* 11 Gorgias seems to establish a very strong connection between persuasion, deception and *doxa* since persuasion is said to be the effect of false speeches and deception, in turn, characterises *logos*' powerful action due to the fact that men who do not possess knowledge are forced to rely on belief that is insecure and unstable. One natural interpretation of this account would be therefore of this kind: *logos* has no relationship with truth, but rather produces persuasion whose action is understandable in terms of doxastic deception, i.e. of *doxai* that are inevitably false. In the context of Gorgias' overall argument, however, this strong – I would even say emphatic – connection seems to me to perform an entirely different task. Gorgias' aim is, in fact, not to argue that there is a necessary relationship between falsity and persuasion but, on the contrary, that there is not a straight connection between persuasion and truth so that a truthful speech is necessarily persuasive. This move, reiterated in *Hel.* 13, has a twofold consequence. On the one hand, it marks a clear distance from Parmenidean thought, where it is said that the first road of in-

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11   On the correct meaning of the term *eikos*, see Di Piazza, Piazza, Serra (2018, 232): "Traditionally the term *eikos* has been translated into English as 'likelihood' or 'probability', and corresponding words in other modern European languages. [...] Actually, the semantical area of the Greek term was wider and more theoretically interesting. Indeed, the core-meaning of this semantical area is the adequateness of the *kind* of reality which *eikos* refers to. It is for this reason that in several contexts the term '*eikos*' has the meaning of 'normal', or 'natural', in the sense of being in line with the expectations or the habits. Since *eikos* has this narrow relationship with expectations and habits, it has a strong *doxastic* component, i.e. it is rooted in *doxai* (opinions)".

quiry "is the path of persuasion, for it accompanies truth" (DK 28 B2). On the other hand, however, it leads the way to the recognition that speech is not a transparent medium through which a non-linguistic truth can pass unaltered. In other words, recognising the possibility of false speeches is Gorgias' move to claim that truth is not only a linguistic affair but also a technical one, the result of a disputable human 'construction'.

6   In the Wake of the Moderns: Gorgias Between Rorty and Foucault

After a long time during which the philosophical dimensions of Gorgias' thought were systematically underestimated, I don't think there is anyone willing to subscribe to this opinion today. According to this change of perspective, it becomes quite reasonable to ask what aspects of modern philosophical reflection Gorgias' thought can be related to. In this last paragraph, I will just mention a possible direction, introducing, however, first of all a general methodological remark. Although I also think that asking such a question may prove useful, I am convinced at same time that to pretend to frame Gorgias' thought too rigidly in modern interpretative categories could be misleading.[12] With this *caveat*, here is my proposal, starting with the epistemological framework of Gorgias' reflection on *logos*. This framework seems to me to be characterised roughly by the intertwining of two elements. On the one hand, there is a clear anti-foundationalist vein, according to which knowledge mirroring an objective reality is considered impossible for humans. This claim, however, does not commit Gorgias to affirm the non-existence of facts. After all, it is a fact that Helen went to Troy, as Gorgias himself says in *Hel.* 5. Nor, on the other hand, does it justify an accusation of inconsistency against him. Gorgias' aim seems to be, in fact, to show that the facts too (understood in a minimal sense) become objects of provisional knowledge only through *logos*' interpretative action. On the other hand, according to the role attributed to this interpretative action, truth identifies with (provisional) justification that in turn should be conceived as the process of advancing argument or evidence in support of our knowledge claims. It is not a matter of a relation between a subject and a non-human reality. Rather, justification should be conceived as a matter of a relation between propositions so that what justifies a given proposition is another proposition. In modern jargon, we could attribute therefore to Gorgias an anti-foundational-

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12   Having said that, Di Iulio's critical survey of possible traces of modern positions in Gorgias' *Encomium of Helen* is really invaluable (Di Iulio, forthcoming, chap. 4).

ist and coherentist position, according to which he "may be regarded as a distant forerunner both of the linguistic turn and of the hermeneutic one" (Trabattoni 2016, 54).[13] As others scholars (e.g. Bermudez 2017) have already argued, it is a theorical position that seems to show noticeable similarities with Rorty's view.[14] There is, however, in my opinion a remarkable and decisive difference. Claiming that truth and justification are socially relative and that there is no foundational benchmark for knowledge and truth, Rorty argues that there is nothing like truth. Truth is an empty word because there is nothing to say about truth. This deflationist account of truth explains, in turn, why Rorty failed to embrace rhetorical theory in any substantive way, cleaving philosophy off the democratic project (Danisch 2013). As Richard Bernstein has written, it is often difficult to avoid thinking that ultimately Rorty's political theory, his defence of liberalism, does not seem to offer much more than an "*apologia* for the *status quo*" (Bernstein 1991, 233).[15] I don't think that Gorgias could subscribe to such a position. Notwithstanding its insightful observations, *Encomium of Helen* is not an epistemological treatise nor a philosophy of language work, at least in modern terms. As I have argued elsewhere (Serra, forthcoming), it has a political meaning, putting forward a conception of knowledge as the product of agonistic and conflictual relations, modelled on the legal case concerning Helen, but extended to a general description of *logos*' action and, above all, of deliberative activity. On the one hand, *Encomium*'s epistemological framework is connected to the somewhat paradoxical thesis according to which persuasion is a form of compulsion. On the other, the activity of the soul's internal deliberation to which Gorgias refers in *Hel.* 11 is modelled on what happened in ancient Greek democratic assemblies.[16] This fact has an important consequence for the

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13   Actually, Trabattoni's statement refers to Plato. I don't have the space here to show to what extent and why Gorgias and Plato, in my opinion, share this definition.

14   According to Bermudez, a study of Gorgias' views could provide insights into how a deflationary account of truth could respond to the accusation of reducing normativity to power. He, however, does not adequately take into account the political nature of Gorgias' thought.

15   See, for example, this statement by Rorty: "It may seem foolish to speak of 'play' as I have done, in the midst of a political struggle that will decide whether civilization has a future, whether our descendants will have any chance to play. But philosophy should try *to express our political hopes rather than to ground our political practices*. On the view I am suggesting, nothing grounds our practices, nothing legitimises them, nothing shows them to be in touch with the way things really are" (quoted in Bernstein 1991, 240, emphasis added).

16   *Hel.* 11: "most people on most subjects furnish themselves with *doxa* as advisor (*symboulos*) to the soul. But opinion, being slippery and unsteady, surrounds those who rely on it with slippery and unsteady successes". In the second half of the fifth century, *symboulos* was an almost technical word used to refer to an orator who was giving advice to the *dêmos* in an assembly. According to Cammack (2020), assembly delibera-

conceptual framework in which we have to insert the action of *logos.* Speakers and audience are not identical, as they are in conversation, but distinct, in that a few are speakers, while the majority are listeners; orators, in turn, are not cooperative but agonistic, aiming to prove their own case and demolish their adversary's. In this perspective, truth, despite being provisional, keeps its conceptual strength intact as a political weapon in the relentless struggle characterising democracy. In the form of a final suggestion, I could say then that Gorgias would rather have subscribed to the following claim repeatedly quoted with approval by Foucault (2013, 84):[17]

> As far back as we go in the behaviour of our species, the 'true utterance' is a force to which few forces resist […] Very early on, the Truth appeared to men as one of the most effective verbal weapons, one of the most prolific seeds of power, one of the most solid foundations for their institutions (my emphasis).

In this way, we glimpse a different interpretative path through which to frame Gorgias' thought. It seems to me to be worthy of exploration, but, as is so often said, this is the topic for another paper.

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tion was almost always represented in ancient sources as guided deliberation in which speaking and deliberating were performed by advisers and decision-makers respectively. The *dêmos* – which is to say the audience – deliberated (*bouleuô*), while those who spoke before it advised (*symbouleuô*).

17 The statement is that of his mentor Georges Dumezil.

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Being Worthy of One's Name
Platonic Tensions Between Language and Reality

Lidia Palumbo
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italia

Abstract   This essay aims to show to what extent names play a crucial role in Plato's philosophy. Important in terms of their capacity to identify and evoke, the *names* that play a role in Homeric epic are *proper names*. In the Platonic dialogues, this role would appear to have been 'inherited' by *common nouns*, which are assigned an original function within a new cultural context. Within the framework of the paideutic debates that Socrates engages in with his interlocutors, names represent something akin to models to be imitated or goals to be attained. Indeed, *paideia* boils down to the formula that invites human beings to become worthy of their names.

Keywords   Names. Platonic dialogues. Akribologia. Ethics. Deontology.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 The *Onoma* in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*: The Warrior's Identity and the Evoking of Someone Absent. – 3 *Onoma* in Plato's Dialogue: The Direction of Research in Philosophy and Life. – 4 Artificialism as a Drive to Perfection. – 5 *Akribologia*. – 6 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

> For neither conjunction, article, nor preposition could be called δεινόν [terrible] or θυμαλγές [soul-grieving].[1]

Thus writes Plutarch in his *Platonicae Quaestiones,* defending Plato's definition of speech,[2] which seems to reduce language to verbs and nouns.[3] Arousing emotion is a quality of speech that does not reside in articles, conjunctions, or prepositions; therefore, these cannot be regarded as integral parts of language.

To prove that conjunctions are not genuine parts of language, Plutarch writes:

> Now neither an animal nor an instrument nor arms nor anything else is more fine, efficacious, or graceful, for the loss of a part. Yet speech, by taking away conjunctions, often becomes more persuasive. (*QP* 1010E3-6)

As an inspired and inspiring interpreter of Plato, Plutarch upholds the centrality of nouns (as well as verbs,[4] which are also *onomata*) in relation to the Platonic conception of language: they relate to other words as living beings relate to inanimate beings.[5] Compared to

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[1] Plutarch, *QP* 1010B7. Here and in the following passages, the translations from Plutarch's *Quaestiones Platonicae* are from Goodwin.

[2] See *Sph.* 262a9-c7: "Discourse is never composed of nouns alone spoken in succession, nor of verbs spoken without nouns […]. In neither case do the words uttered indicate action or inaction or existence of anything that exists or does not exist, until the verbs are mingled with the nouns; then the words fit, and their first combination is a sentence, about the first and shortest form of discourse" (The translations of the *Sophist* are from Fowler). See Cherniss 1976; Giavatto 2006.

[3] Plutarch, *QP* 1009D4-E4, writes: "For very likely in the beginning men wanted speech and articulate voice, to enable them to express clearly at once the passions and the patients, the actions and the agents. Now, since actions and affections (τὰ πράγματα καὶ τὰ πάθη) are sufficiently expressed by verbs, and they that act and are affected (τοὺς πράττοντας αὐτὰ καὶ πάσχοντας) by nouns, as he [*scil.* Plato] says, these seem to signify. And one may say, the rest signify not. For instance, the groans and shrieks of stage-players, and even their smiles and reticence, make their discourse more emphatic. But they have no necessary power to signify anything, as a noun and verb have, but only an ascititious power to vary speech".

[4] Ademollo 2015. The fact that Plato uses the term *onomata* to refer to both names and verbs becomes quite clear if we read *Tht.* 202b4-5 alongside *Cra.* 431b5-c1: see Thornton 1986, 165-79; esp. 167.

[5] Plutarch, *QP* 1011A5-B4, writes: "And inasmuch as logicians mightily want conjunctions for the joining together their axioms, as much as charioteers want yokes (ὥσπερ ἡνιόχους ζυγῶν), and Ulysses wanted withs to tie Cyclop's sheep; this shows they are not parts of speech, but a conjunctive instrument (ὄργανόν τι συνδετικὸν) thereof, as the word conjunction imports (καθάπερ ὠνόμασται). Nor do conjunctions join all, but only such as are not spoken simply; unless you will make a cord part of the burthen,

nouns – Plutarch states – the other terms which are used in language without properly belonging to it are like accessories, with a subordinate and instrumental function:

> prepositions [προθέσεις] are like to the crests of a helmet, or footstools and pedestals [ἐπικράνοις καὶ βάσεσι καὶ ὑποθέμασιν], which (one may rather say) do belong to words than are words themselves. (*QP* 1011D1-2)[6]

The philosopher states:

> join and confound together conjunctions, articles, and prepositions, supposing you would make something of them; yet you will be taken to babble, and not to speak sense. But when there is a verb in construction with a noun, the result is speech and sense. (*QP* 1010A6-B3)

These observations made by Plutarch as an interpreter of Plato may be taken to introduce the topic of the present essay, which aims to prove the fundamental role played by *onomata* not so much in the Platonic theory of speech allegedly developed by Socrates with (or against) one of his interlocutors, but rather in terms of the protreptic power of Plato's message to his readers.[7] Indeed, I believe that in the dialogues the emotional potential of words is used to lead readers towards philosophy. And I believe that the dialogues are not so much repositories of doctrines or texts from which to draw theories and arguments as dramatic texts in which what really matters is not the views that the characters uphold, but the hidden, not immediately evident, teachings that emerge from the text – through the characters' discussions or, so to say, in their wake.[8]

What truly matters in the dialogues is what lies at the end of a discussion and at the beginning of another:[9] that drive towards re-

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glue a part of a book, or distribution of money part of the government. For Demades says, that money which is given to the people out of the exchequer for public shows is the glue of a democracy".

6 Plutarch, *QP* 1010D5, adds that even in the language of the Romans, which "has taken away all prepositions" and which does not admit of any of the words we call articles, we can find the same phenomenon: "nouns (as it were) without skirts and borders". It is little wonder that Homer puts articles only to a few nouns, "like handles to cans, or crests to helmets" (ὥσπερ λαβὰς ἐκπώμασι δεομένοις ἢ λόφους κράνεσιν).

7 See Gordon 1999.

8 See Gonzalez 1995; Ausland 1997; Erler 2001; Michelini 2003; Press 2007; Charalabopoulos 2012.

9 According to the brilliant interpretation provided by Erler 2021, the aporetic conclusions of the dialogues set the ground for other discussions that will attempt to solve questions left open. From this perspective, it may be argued that the conclusions and

search that occurs in identical form in other times and places, and which is staged in different contexts bears witness to its importance.

The thesis of this essay is that one of these constant drives towards philosophical research found in the dialogues, one of these implicit teachings that can be identified in Plato's texts, is connected to the importance of the *onoma.*

It is a strong thesis. I will endeavour to show that the dialogues lead us towards philosophy by encouraging us to become *worthy of our names.* Each man must become worthy of the name 'man'; each teacher, friend or politician must honour the name he bears. The starting point of this strong thesis is a remark that underlines the role played by the *onoma*, and by the revealing of the *onoma*, in some crucial passages of Homeric epic, which largely serves as the subtext of Plato's dialogues. I will then directly turn to the dialogues *Sophist*, *Republic*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*, where – as we shall see – the *onoma* issue takes a new form.

I will start by noting how, in the *Odyssey,* the *onoma* is used to express heroes' identity, through all the emotional and affective implications connected to the act of naming. I will then move on to consider the *Iliad*, in which the heroes call each other by name before dying and killing. Finally, we will see how, in Plato's dialogues, a crucial role is played, for each living being, by the search for one's 'own name': a name that is no longer a 'proper name', as in Homeric epic, but rather the 'common noun' that is used in the city to describe both an individual's occupation and his or her role in the world.[10]

2 The *Onoma* in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*: The Warrior's Identity and the Evoking of Someone Absent

The first epic context I wish to consider is very famous: it is one of those passages that make literature's horizons infinite.

This is Book 8 of the *Odyssey.* Odysseus, disguised as an as-yet unknown castaway, is welcomed by Alcinous, king of the Phaeacians. Demodocus, the blind poet, sings about the fall of Troy and mentions glorious Odysseus by name (*Od*. 8.502, 517). A violent emotion overwhelms the hero, who covers his face with his cloak to hide it. The king addresses Odysseus with winged words to persuade him to reveal his identity:

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prologues are connecting points – *limbs* – within that *living body* of writings represented by Plato's dialogues.

10   What I mean is that in Plato's dialogues what we are dealing with is not with the 'proper name' or 'personal name' (e.g. Odysseus), as in Homer, but rather one's 'own name', i.e. that name which in the public sphere indicates a person's role (his/her profession etc.).

Tell me the name by which they were wont to call thee in thy home, even thy mother and thy father and other folk besides, thy townsmen and the dwellers round about. For there is no one of all mankind who is nameless, be he base man or noble, when once he has been born, but parents bestow names on all when they give them birth. And tell me thy country, thy people, and thy city, that our ships may convey thee thither, discerning the course by their wits.[11] (*Od.* 8.550-6)

At the beginning of Book 9 Odysseus reveals his identity to Alcinous: "I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, whom known among men for all manner of wiles, and my fame reaches unto heaven" (*Od.* 9.19).

Another extremely important context in which the hero is asked to reveal his identity is found in Book 9. The setting is the Cyclops' cave. When Polyphemus asks for his name, Odysseus answers: "Noman is my name, Noman do they call me – my mother and my father, and all my comrades as well (*Od.* 9.366-7)". Everything that follows this event in the *Odyssey* is influenced by the name 'Noman' that Odysseus gives the Cyclops. The Cyclop has introduced himself: his name is Polyphemus. As his name indicates, he is a man of many words and great fame. Odysseus claims to be called Οὖτις, meaning 'nobody', but – as Vernant has stressed[12] – this is a pun: if in the word Οὖτις, which literally means "not-somebody", the negation expressed by the syllable οὐ is replaced by the syllable μή, which is also a negation – in Greek μή and οὐ are mostly equivalent – then instead of Οὖτις, which is the *false name* that Odysseus gives Polyphemus to hide, we will have μῆτις, which is the *real name* that expresses Odysseus' true essence. Odysseus, after all, is the hero of μῆτις – cunning, with the ability to come up with solutions, to find a way around problems, and to get by. It is Homer himself who informs us that this is a word game – that Οὖτις is a perfect synonym for Μῆτις, that the name it conceals is the very name it reveals. He does so when he describes blind Polyphemus asking his Cyclops friends for help without receiving any, because they understand μή τίς instead of Οὖτις:

"What so sore distress is thine, Polyphemus, that thou criest out thus through the immortal night, and makest us sleepless? Can it be that some mortal man (μή τίς) is driving off thy flocks against thy will, or slaying thee thyself by guile or by might?" Then from out the cave mighty Polyphemus answered them: "My friends, it is Noman (Οὖτις) that is slaying me by guile and not by force". And they made answer and addressed him with winged words:

"If, then, no man does violence to thee in thy loneliness, sickness which comes from great Zeus thou mayest in no wise escape". (*Od*. 9.403-12)

The name Οὖτις works as a narrative device: by concealing the hero's identity from his enemy (he is Noman), at the same time it reveals this identity to the reader (he is μῆτις, cunning). This revelation – which influences the course of narrated events (the hero will live thanks to his name) – takes place on a deeper level than the one on which the events occur (the name reveals the hero's true essence).[13]

Another case in which Odysseus' name has considerable relevance – this time revealing the *onoma*'s potential on the level of affective memory – is found in Book 4 of the *Odyssey.* Menelaus recalls all the heroes who fought at Troy and utters Odysseus' name before Telemachus:

yet for them all I mourn not so much, despite my grief, as for one only, who makes me to loathe both sleep and food, when I think of him; for no one of the Achaeans toiled so much as Odysseus toiled and endured. (*Od*. 4.104-7)

As Michele Simondon has emphasised,[14] uttering a person's name is an act of evocation. When he hears his father's name, Telemachus is moved to tears and modestly hides his eyes behind his cloak (*Od*. 4.113-16).

The mentioning of a name also reveals all its importance in the field of affective memory in the dialogue between Eumaeus and the beggar, whom Eumaeus still hasn't recognised as Odysseus. This occurs in verse 145 of Book 14. Eumaeus does not wish to utter his master's name, so he only talks about him using a pronoun: "his name I speak with awe" (ὀνομάζειν αἰδέομαι) – he says – suggesting that the name brings back painful memories. As soon as Eumaeus utters Odysseus' name (144 μ' Ὀδυσσῆος πόθος αἴνυται οἰχομένοιο), memories resurface: "greatly did he love me and care for me at heart". To utter one's own name is to make one's own identity present, to give oneself over to the listener. To utter the name of someone absent is to make him or her somehow present.

The *onoma*'s power is such as to overshadow the importance of the other elements in a sentence. On the Trojan battlefield, each hero utters his own name and patronymic, the name of his people, and

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13 Once everything is over, the hero will reveal his name in order to boast of his cunning: "Cyclops, if any one of mortal men shall ask thee about the shameful blinding of thine eye, say that Odysseus, the sacker of cities, blinded it, even the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca" (*Od*. 9.503-5).

14 Simondon 1982, 71-2.

that of his battle companion; most importantly, he utters the name of the enemy he is about to face and who, in the event of victory, will bring him glory. The context is Book 16 of the *Iliad.* Hector, Priam's son, addresses Patroclus before killing him:

> Patroclus, thou thoughtest, I ween, that thou wouldest sack our city, and from the women of Troy wouldest take the day of freedom and bear them in thy ships to thy dear native land, thou fool. Nay, in front of them the swift horses of Hector stride forth to the fight, and with the spear I myself am pre-eminent among the war-loving Trojans, even I that ward from them the day of doom; but for thee, vultures shall devour thee here. Ah, poor wretch, even Achilles, for all his valour, availed thee not, who, I ween, though himself abiding behind, laid strait command upon thee, as thou wentest forth: "Come not back, I charge thee, Patroclus, master of horsemen, to the hollow ships, till thou hast cloven about the breast of man-slaying Hector the tunic red with his blood". So, I ween, spake he to thee, and persuaded thy wits in thy witlessness. (*Il.* 16.830-42)

Here, using an apostrophe, Homer speaks to Patroclus, who in turn addresses Hector:

> Then, thy strength all spent, didst thou answer him, knight Patroclus: "For this time, Hector, boast thou mightily; for to thee have Zeus, the son of Cronos, and Apollo, vouchsafed victory, they that subdued me full easily, for of themselves they took the harness from my shoulders. But if twenty such as thou had faced me, here would all have perished, slain by my spear. Nay, it was baneful Fate and the son of Leto that slew me, and of men Euphorbus, while thou art the third in my slaying. And another thing will I tell thee, and do thou lay it to heart: verily thou shalt not thyself be long in life, but even now doth death stand hard by thee, and mighty fate, that thou be slain beneath the hands of Achilles, the peerless son of Aeacus". (*Il.* 16. 844-54)

In these passages from Book 16 of the *Iliad* – and in many others that could also be mentioned – the names of the heroes stand out for their importance: both the name of the dying hero uttered by the warrior who is killing him, and that of the slayer uttered by the dying man.[15]

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[15] In the dialogue between Hector and Patroclus in the above-quoted passage, the prophecy of the former's death uttered by the dying Patroclus also makes Achilles' presence felt: the hero is evoked through his name and, in a way, made immortal precisely by the inclusion of his name in the poem that sings of his glory.

This dramatic structure that connects the *onoma* to promises of heroism and prophecies of death and immortality is also present in post-Homeric culture and society. In an enhanced and at the same time modified form, it likewise occurs in Plato's philosophy, where the heroism involved is no longer that of the battlefield, which requires strength and courage, but rather the heroism of virtue as such.

3 *Onoma* in Plato's Dialogue: The Direction of Research in Philosophy and Life

The heroism of virtue that we find in Plato's dialogues is also connected to *onoma*. The latter, however, is no longer the proper name,[16] which is known to all the speakers, and which occurs in the epic text to identify and evoke an individual as the marker of heroic epic; rather, it coincides with the common noun which, as is always the case in the dialogues, constitutes the outcome of an enquiry begun with a question.

At the beginning of the enquiry, we know *only* the name, but not that to which the name refers. This situation is explicitly laid out at the beginning of the *Sophist*.

The Eleatic Stranger and Theaetetus try to define what a sophist is. They discover that at the beginning all they share is the name (218c2 πέρι τοὔνομα μόνον ἔχομεν κοινῇ), while having different ideas as to what they are calling by that name (218c2-3 τὸ δὲ ἔργον ἐφ᾽ ᾧ καλοῦμεν). Therefore, by means of arguments (διὰ λόγων), they will have to reach an agreement about the thing itself (218c4 πέρι τὸ πρᾶγμα αὐτὸ) rather than on the name alone, without argument (218c5 ἢ τοὔνομα μόνον συνωμολογῆσθαι χωρὶς λόγου).

This crucial statement of intent at the beginning of the *Sophist* is actually to be found in all dialogues, where it implicitly lies at the beginning of every enquiry: for having names alone, without the arguments seeking to explain these *onomata* by associating them with the *erga* and *pragmata* to which they refer, means having nothing at all. An *onoma* without its *ergon* is nothing.

The first step in any investigation, then, is to be aware of this necessary, mutual implication between *onomata* and *erga*. Words are bridges that help us to understand something extra-linguistic: if they do not lead to this, they lead to nothing at all.

In the *Sophist*, a lengthy enquiry will be required in order to connect the *onoma sophistes* to its *ergon*. Once this has been done, on the very last page of the dialogue the Stranger addresses the follow-

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16 According to Chantraine 1984, s.v. "ὄνομα", this term in Homer indicates the proper name, and with the privative particle – νώνυμνος – means "nameless, without glory".

ing question to Theaetetus (268c): "Shall we then bind up his name as we did before, winding it up from the end to the beginning?".

Through a lengthy enquiry marked by moments of profound aporetic discouragement, the protagonists of the investigation staged in the dialogue have discovered the nature of the sophist. On the last page of the text, they thus set out to sum up the outcomes they have reached in order to bind (συνδήσομεν) the sophist's name to its *pragma*. Occurring at the beginning and the end of the investigation, the reference to the *onoma* tells us that the whole thing falls within the framework of the drive – underlying every enquiry – to keep names and things together. And it is this, much more than the individual affirmations defining the sophist, which constitutes the dialogue's teaching. Yet there is more to it.

4　Artificialism as a Drive to Perfection

There is one aspect of Plato's philosophy that Vegetti called "artificialismo" (artificialism),[17] which is to say the tendency to think that, in a way, the world, knowledge, society, and man are "artefacts", the possible (and perfectible) products of an intentionality which operates on what is subject to change by referring to an immutable and eternal model. Artificialism entails that in order to create anything, there must be some pliable matter, a perfect model, and a *demiurgos* capable of transforming this pliable matter in accordance with the perfect model. This applies to each thing as much as to the sum of all things: even to create the world, a paradigm of forms is required from which to draw inspiration – the ideas – along with a divine craftsman – the Demiurge – and a spatio-temporal environment onto which these ideal forms can be imprinted. These, as Vegetti recalls, are the cosmogonic ingredients to which Plato resorts in the *Timaeus*.[18]

The reflection on artificialism enables me to touch upon another point: the fact that in Plato's philosophy there is a *direction* in which to orient the movement of transformation, namely that indicated for each living being by its own *name*.[19] This "own name" is not the "proper name", but rather that common noun we use to describe each person's occupation – his or her role in the world.

17　Vegetti 2003, 82 ff.

18　Vegetti 2007, 111-22.

19　To say that matter is moulded in accordance with a given form is to make an abstract claim. In order to be *concretely* traced, and traced via arguments, the path leading to transformation must refer to the level of the meanings associated with the name in question. These exercise an enlightening, and motivating, function with respect to the transformation itself.

Each individual must turn into the complete version of himself, which is precisely the one represented and, so to speak, encapsulated by his *onoma*. Each person, then, must become a physician, a helmsman, a craftsman, a philosopher, and so on, by following his own nature, as inscribed in an *onoma*. The *Protagoras* passage quoted below offers a good example of this: *paideia* is the path we follow to become what we wish to become, by fulfilling our potential and developing our talent. Our abilities are expressed by the aim we pursue: for example, becoming a physician. Becoming worthy of one's name (in *Laches* 179d we find the expression τῶν ὀνομάτων ἄξιοι γένοιντο) is the paideutic path par excellence.

In the context of an argument designed to bring the importance of *paideia* into focus, in the so-called second prologue of the *Protagoras*, Socrates asks Hippocrates (*Prt*. 311b-312a):[20]

> Tell me, Hippocrates, I said, in your present design of going to Protagoras and paying him money as a fee for his services to yourself, to whom do you consider you are resorting, and what is it that you are to become? Suppose, for example, you had taken it into your head to call on your namesake Hippocrates of Cos, the Asclepiad, and pay him money as your personal fee, and suppose someone asked you – Tell me, Hippocrates, in purposing to pay a fee to Hippocrates, what do you consider him to be? How would you answer that?

> A doctor, I would say.

> And what would you intend to become?

> A doctor, he replied.

> And suppose you had a mind to approach Polycleitus the Argive or Pheidias the Athenian and pay them a personal fee, and somebody asked you – What is it that you consider Polycleitus or Pheidias to be, that you are minded to pay them this money? What would your answer be to that?

> Sculptors, I would reply.

> And what would you intend to become?

> Obviously, a sculptor.

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20   On these passages, see Marino 2019, 17-68. To quote Meoli 2004, 81, "se cercare che cosa sia un sofista significa rincorrere un concetto invisibile, il nome con cui il concetto viene appellato serve a renderlo visibile, il nome è il volto empirico di un concetto" – the name is the means by which the concept becomes an image. The name says something (*legei*, 312c5). The translations of Plato's *corpus* are from Lamb.

Very well then, I said; you and I will go now to Protagoras, prepared to pay him money as your fee, from our own means if they are adequate for the purpose of prevailing on him, but if not, then drawing on our friends' resources to make up the sum. Now if anyone, observing our extreme earnestness in the matter, should ask us, – Pray, Socrates and Hippocrates, what is it that you take Protagoras to be, when you purpose to pay him money? What should we reply to him? What is the other name that we commonly hear attached to Protagoras?²¹ They call Pheidias a sculptor and Homer a poet: what title do they give Protagoras?

A sophist, to be sure, Socrates, is what they call him.

This passage clearly bears witness to that change in the *onoma*'s paradigm – outlined above – which goes from being a proper name, as in the heroic age (a name expressing the warrior's identity, connected to his country, stock, and patronymic, an identity making the hero unique and unmistakable), to becoming a common noun in a society based on arts and crafts, such as the fifth century BC Athens depicted in Plato's dialogues. This common noun expresses a common good, an activity carried out in the public sphere, such as artisan or philosopher, for instance. What matters now is the competence of the *technites*: the physician, the poet, the sculptor. The quest is not for victory and fame, but for expertise and profit. It is within this framework that – in the *Protagoras* as much as in the *Sophist* – the question about the sophist is addressed, in an effort to examine his ambiguous status on the technical level through an enquiry beginning with a question about the *onoma*:²² What is Protagoras' name? This is tantamount to asking: Who is Protagoras? What is his profession? What does one become by embracing his *paideia*? Spending time with a teacher means planning to become like him, to imitate him, to repeat his gestures and his profession – in one word, his name. By studying under a poet, we become poets ourselves: along with our teacher's name, we take on his destiny.

Likewise, the lawgiver's activity, which consists in naming things,²³ is not merely to give each thing some kind of determination to distinguish it from all the rest and make it knowable – it is much more than this. It means showing the direction in which things must pro-

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21 Cf. Pl. *Grg.* 448b.

22 See *Prt.* 319b: when the assembly must decide περὶ οἰκοδομίας (about building works), builders (τοὺς οἰκοδόμους) are called in to provide advice about building works (περὶ τῶν οἰκοδομημάτων). The *onoma* is repeated three times in two lines – and the same occurs with the laying down of a ship. Cf. *Grg.* 455b.

23 Among the Pythagorean *akousmata*, one states: "The wisest thing is number and, immediately after it, he who has given things their names" (πάντων σοφώτατον ὁ ἀριθμός, δεύτερος δὲ ὁ τοῖς πράγμασι τὰ ὀνόματα θέμενος, Aelian. *var. Hist.* 4.17).

ceed in order to *become what they are*. Only by investigating this aspect can we understand in what sense Platonic artificialism goes as far as to plan – along with a rigorous language, which serves as a compass – a world as perfect as possible.

A particularly significant passage in this respect is the one devoted to *akribologia* in Book 1 of the *Republic*.

5 *Akribologia*

Akribologia can teach us what common nouns truly mean: for example, it can tell us what a physician is, rigorously speaking (341c4-5 ὁ τῷ ἀκριβεῖ λόγῳ ἰατρός). A rigorous argument shows that a physician is (i.e., must be) a healer of the sick (341c7 τῶν καμνόντων θεραπευτής). This answer is 'akribological' insofar as it is provided not by empirical experience, which only grasps the appearance of things, but rather by an enquiry that goes as far as to grasp the essence of the matter. What I mean is that, according to Plato, only he who heals the sick is a physician, and is worthy of this name – not anyone who is called by the name of physician. It is not experience which teaches us that a "physician" is someone who heals the sick[24] – for experience offers plenty of examples of physicians who kill, rather than heal, their patients. This is something we learn from a rigorous argument, according to which a true physician (342d7 ὁ ἀκριβὴς ἰατρός; 345c2 ἀληθῶς ἰατρός) is someone who is true to his name and never errs – for if he does, he is not a true physician. Likewise, the "the pilot rightly so called" (ὁ ὀρθῶς κυβερνήτης) is the ruler of sailors (341c10 ναυτῶν ἄρχων), which is where he gets his name from; the same applies to οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχουσιν, "those who truly rule" (343b5 οἱ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχουσιν), and so on.

The context is Book 1, where Glaucon and Adeimantus embark with Socrates on the search for the nature of justice. Another character who has already taken part in this enquiry is Thrasymachus, the aggressive sophist whose role it is to remind everyone of the nature of the power with which justice must deal.

Each government – Thrasymachus argues – enacts laws in view of its own advantage: democracies issue democratic laws; tyrannies, tyrannical ones. Once laws have been enacted, the just is always identified with what is advantageous to the established government in power (338e-339a); hence, the just is the advantage of the stronger.

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24 We do not learn from experience; rather, through its contradictoriness, experience provides the conditions to overcome aporia, which is the hallmark of philosophical conversion. An interesting study, which also draws upon this Platonic idea as a key to interpret the dialogues, is Byrd 2007, 365-81.

In the context of this argument (340c-341a), in order to respond to an objection raised by Socrates, Thrasymachus makes a crucial claim. If – he argues – the just is the advantage of the stronger, then this advantage is always rightly deemed such (by he who is stronger and in power) and there cannot be any errors of judgement in this field, which is to say that of *akribologia* (340e2 κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον). A physician is someone who heals the sick, a mathematician is someone who makes calculations without any mistakes. An expert – Thrasymachus states – never errs insofar as he is what we claim he is: strictly speaking, no one who is an expert in any art ever makes mistakes. Those who err do so because of some deficiency with respect to their art; hence, an artist as such cannot err. An artist "as such" exemplifies a living being worthy of his name.

Rigorously speaking (κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον, 340e2), no professional errs: for if someone is mistaken, he displays a lack of knowledge, and hence is no longer a real professional (*R.* 1.340c-e).

The need for a rigorous way of thinking, capable of grasping things in their essence, is paradoxically spelled out in the *Republic* not by the character of Socrates, but by Thrasymachus: it is he who notes that when we think about something in a rigorous way and use its name in order to talk about it, we do not think of that thing in terms of its empirical particularity, but rather of what it is in itself, quite apart from everything which occurs to that specific thing – bearing that name – on the empirical level.

What 'akribological' language defines is a rigorous world in which physicians heal the sick, rulers care for the well-being of those they rule, and those who know how to navigate are called helmsmen. This world, in which no one errs and each individual is anchored in his or her own *onoma*, is the only point of reference for a kind of morality that takes virtue as a whole as its model.

However, the Platonic tendency to envisage names as a compass – a tool that helps human beings to understand in what direction they should orient their education– is not illustrated only by the 'akribological' context of the first book of the *Republic*. The same tendency is reflected by an important passage from the *Gorgias*.

In his discussion with Callicles in this dialogue, Socrates argues: "There is not a single case in which a ruler of a city could ever be unjustly ruined by the very city that he rules *Grg.* 519b-c)".

This argument rests entirely on the meaning of the name[25] προστάτης, which literally means "he who stands in front, in the first row", and hence "leader", "defender", "guarantor". Being the

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25 Cf. *Prt.* 326d-e, where Protagoras states that punishment is a form of correction and that it has been given this name precisely because it corrects: καὶ ὄνομα τῇ κολάσει ταύτῃ, ὡς εὐθυνούσης τῆς δίκης, εὐθῦναι.

leader of a city – according to Socrates – means educating it, lead-
ing it in the right direction. If a leader is incapable of educating his
city, he is not really a leader. If he is put to death by his fellow citi-
zens, this occurs either justly or unjustly, and in both cases, he was
not a real leader. In the former case, he is justly sentenced precisely
because he failed to do what was required of him. In the latter case,
if he is sentenced unjustly, it still means that he failed to educate his
fellow citizens to pass correct judgements – hence, strictly speaking,
he is not being sentenced unjustly. It is interesting to note that this
point is once again explained by taking the sophist as an example:

> For it is very much the same with pretenders to statesmanship as
> with professors of sophistry. (*Grg.* 519c2-4)

> Now what can be more unreasonable than this plea? That men, af-
> ter they have been made good and just, after all their injustice has
> been rooted out by their teacher and replaced by justice, should be
> unjust through something that they have not! Does not this seem
> to you absurd, my dear friend? (*Grg.* 519d)

6 Conclusions

In light of all the passages analysed, it may be argued that *onomata*
play a crucial role in Plato's philosophy. Important in terms of their
capacity to identify and evoke, the *onomata* which play a role in Ho-
meric epic are proper names. In the Platonic dialogues, this role
would appear to have been 'inherited' by common nouns, which are
assigned a novel and original function within a new cultural context.

What is most interesting to note is the fact that, within the frame-
work of the paideutic debates that Socrates engages in with his inter-
locutors, names represent something akin to models to be imitated
or goals to be attained. Indeed, *paideia* as a whole is encapsulated by
that formula which invites human beings to become worthy of their
names, so to speak.

When examined through the 'akribological' language that is first
introduced in Book 1 of the *Republic*, where we meet the names of
technitai repeatedly mentioned in the dialogues (the physician, the
helmsman), correct *onomata* can be seen to embody the essential
characteristics of the tasks of each of these *technitai*. Therefore,
clear definitions can serve as compasses for human life. Through the
precise knowledge of what these tasks imply and the corresponding
proper use of names – 'akribological' words, *onomata* close to their
erga – human beings can follow the path to virtue, which leads to a
place where physicians heal individuals and politicians heal commu-
nities; a place where punishments are inflicted to teach people not to

err, and where each person lives a meaningful life by occupying his or her proper place in the world, which is made up like a language.

Generally speaking, scholars interested in investigating the issue of language in Plato's philosophy focus on the *Cratylus*. But it may be argued that the importance of words in the dialogues has yet to be fully explored and that this enquiry can yield some surprising outcomes if we focus on different dialogues, which only touch upon the issue of names implicitly.

I have sought to take a small step in this direction with the present essay, which I would like to bring to a close through a hermeneutical suggestion that, in an effort to illustrate the evocative – and allusive – power of names in Plato's writing, seeks to identify a figure within the dialogues which, through its many hidden meanings, might be taken to embody the very nature of language.

Let us return to the *Protagoras*, then – to the point in the dialogue where, after crossing the threshold of Callias' house, Socrates and Hippocrates are greeted by the whole throng of sophists. Quoting the Homeric hemistich from *Odyssey* 11.601, in 315b9 Plato makes the *Nekyia* the subtext of this passage in the dialogue, which juxtaposes the figures of Sisyphus and Heracles to those of Protagoras and Hippias. In *Prt.* 315d9 we then come across a new quotation from the Homeric song of the dead (11.582), which is what interests us here:

> "Nay more, Tantalus also did I there behold" – for you know Prodicus of Ceos is in Athens too: he was in a certain apartment formerly used by Hipponieus as a strong-room.

In the Platonic text, Prodicus is therefore assimilated to Tantalus.[26] What – we may ask – is the reason for this assimilation? According to myth, Tantalus has received a terrible punishment in Hades: everlasting hunger and thirst, which he cannot extinguish, despite the presence of water and sweet fruits, as these draw away from his hands as soon as he tries to grasp them. Given that, in Plato's dialogues, Prodicus, the bearer of wisdom about names,[27] embodies language itself, it may be hypothesised that the assimilation of Prodicus to Tantalus represents the endless striving of language to grasp its ungraspable object.

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[26] See Willink 1983; De Vita 2004.

[27] See Taormina 2004, 375-89; 376. According to Socrates, wisdom about names coincides with Prodicus' wisdom. It is variously described in *Euthd.* 277e4, *Cra.* 384b6, *La.* 197d59, and *Chrm.* 163d4.

Names can never touch that which they stand for;[28] people, in their empirical reality, can never attain the perfection which words enjoy within *akribologia*, yet philosophy lies precisely in this striving – the striving of words to express things, the striving to know what things are in order to name them properly, human beings' striving to be worthy of the names they bear and the place they occupy.

This, then, is a possible explanation of Tantalus-Prodicus' punishment: as linguistic animals yearning for virtue, we human beings are condemned to strive after the object of our yearning, to see it and almost touch it without ever really attaining it. This is both our strength and our weakness.

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28 The opposite view was held by Plato's opponent Antisthenes, on whom see Brancacci 1990.

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Wittgenstein vs. Socrates: Wittgenstein and Plato

James C. Klagge
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Abstract   Wittgenstein opposes Socrates' insistence that words should have an essentialist definition. Wittgenstein also stands with Euthyphro in his discussion with Socrates over whether God's commands make an action good. While Socrates values the examined life, Wittgenstein wonders how we can stop the demand for more explanation. For this Wittgenstein may find more sympathy from Plato. Plato pays attention to the characters in his dialogues – the particulars of their circumstances, and he offers myths that supplement his arguments. In the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry, we can see Wittgenstein wishing to side against Socrates but with Plato – who found ways of making philosophy poetic.

Keywords   Wittgenstein. Socrates. Plato. Definition. Forms. Explanation. Dialogue.

Wittgenstein was infamous for being rather poorly read in the history of philosophy, and really in philosophy generally. For example, he confessed to his students[1] that he had never read any Aristotle! But another friend and student, von Wright (1984, 19), reported that "he did read and enjoy Plato". And von Wright conjectures: "He must have recognized congenial features, both in Plato's literary and philosophical method and in the temperament behind the thoughts". Wittgenstein's manuscripts and conversations contain dozens of mentions of, or allusions to, Plato's dialogues, especially the *Theaetetus*, but including many others.[2] At his death a multi-volume German translation of Plato's dialogues was found among his possessions (Hallett 1977, 771).

Socrates, in Plato's early dialogues,[3] regularly asks 'What is x?' where x may, for example, be piety (in the *Euthyphro*), virtue (*Meno*), or courage (*Laches*). We construe this as a request for a definition, yet his interlocutors initially respond only with examples or instances of the term. A pious action, says Euthyphro, is "what I am doing now" (5d). Meno mentions a man's virtue, a woman's virtue, the virtue of a child, an elderly man, and a slave (71e-72a). Socrates always responds by pushing the interlocutor for what we would call an essence – a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the concept – what it is that *underlies* the instances, *in virtue of which* they are instances of the concept in question (*Euthyphro* 6d): "Bear in mind then that I did not bid you tell me one or two of the many pious actions but that form itself that makes all pious actions pious…". And *Meno* (72c): "Tell me, what is this very thing [...] in which they are all the same and do not differ from one another. [...] Even if they are many and various, all of them have one and the same form which makes them virtues, and it is right to look to this". (While we see the term 'form' here, I don't think it yet has the metaphysical weight it will come to have later).

The interlocutors generally come to see what he is looking for, and offer some essence, but one that then turns out to be either too broad, or too narrow, or both. Discussion proceeds until, usually, the interlocutor tires or pleads other obligations (Euthyphro 15e). The dialogue generally ends before a satisfactory definition is found.

Socrates, in these early dialogues, does not imagine that these concepts might fail to have, or not need, such an essence. Socrates seems not to even consider the possibility that the concept might lack such an essence. But, if you think about it, not all concepts *can* have essences of this sort – short of circularity or infinite regress – so one should always keep in mind that a concept may lack an essence.

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[1] Drury 1984, 158; Britton 2016, 495.

[2] See Kienzler 2013 for a full accounting.

[3] For Plato's works, unless otherwise specified, I follow Cooper 1997's edition..

This brings us to Wittgenstein's well-known critique of essentialism regarding the unity of a concept. He tries to reduce our expectations for what is a satisfying resolution of Socrates' question – What is x? In the *Blue Book*, dictated in 1933-34, Wittgenstein warns that (1958, 17) "what makes it difficult for us to take this line of investigation is our craving for generality" and our "contemptuous attitude toward the particular case" (18). Talking with his friend, Con Drury, in the early 1930s, Wittgenstein confessed (Drury 1984, 115):

> when Socrates asks for the meaning of a word and people give him examples of how that word is used, he isn't satisfied but wants a unique definition. Now if someone shows me how a word is used and its different meanings, that is just the sort of answer I want.

In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein addresses this issue in connection with games. Wittgenstein sees Socrates' demand for an essence for a concept as a compulsion that holds us captive: "There *must* be something common" (Wittgenstein 2009, §66). To escape from this prejudice, he recommends: "don't think, but look!" *Thinking* leaves us beholden to the temptations of our times; *looking* brings us back to earth. There we will see only "a complicated network of similarities". As he said in a course lecture (Wittgenstein 1993, 367; June 1, 1936):

> We might solve certain puzzles by pointing out that we mustn't look for one common property to be found in all cases: a kinship may be there, but with no common property to which you can point.

 – what he called a 'family resemblance'.

Some have responded to Wittgenstein by trying to offer especially careful definitions of 'game'.[4] But even if this were successful, it would not undermine Wittgenstein's point. (Here, I wish in his lecture he hadn't said that we 'mustn't look for' but rather that we *needn't insist on finding* a common property). Wittgenstein in fact admits that some terms *are* definable in essentialist terms. In the *Blue Book* (Wittgenstein 1958, 25), for example, he offers the "defining" criterion of angina as having "the bacillus so-and-so in his blood". And no one could doubt that the definition of a triangle is: a closed plane figure whose three straight sides form three angles. Let us call such terms with essential definitions 'technical terms'. Wittgenstein does not object to the existence of technical terms. He objects to the Socratic prejudice that *all* terms are technical terms.

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4 See, for example, Suits 2005, 48-9, 55.

Wittgenstein makes similar points about the concepts of 'language' (Wittgenstein 2009, §65), 'goodness' (Wittgenstein 2009, §77; Wittgenstein 1979, 33; Bouwsma 1986, 40-2), 'punishment', 'revolution', 'knowledge', 'cultural decay', and 'music' (Wittgenstein 1984, 190). (And see also William James's 'Wittgensteinian' account of 'religion', in the opening paragraph of Lecture II in James 1982). In each case there is no definition but rather a series of connections from case to case that constitute a kinship.

Wittgenstein sums up his position in the early 1930s this way (Wittgenstein, Waismann 2003, 33):

> I can characterize my standpoint no better than by saying that it is the antithetical standpoint to the one occupied by Socrates in the Platonic dialogues. For if I were asked what knowledge is, I would enumerate instances of knowledge and add the words 'and similar things'.

In a contemporary typescript (Wittgenstein 2005, 56), after a similar discussion of Socrates' essentialist expectation, and his own satisfaction with enumeration and kinship, he remarks parenthetically: "(I'm making it easier and easier for myself in philosophy. But the difficulty is to make it easier for oneself and yet to remain precise)." 'Easier' by having reduced expectations for what is required of a legitimate concept. A voice in the *Philosophical Investigations*, that sounds suspiciously like Bertrand Russell, complains (Wittgenstein 2009, §65): "So you let yourself off the very part of the investigation that once gave you yourself most headache…".[5]

It is an interesting question how one might decide whether a term was susceptible of an essentialist definition, or when you can let yourself off the search. What are we to make of the fact that in the Socratic dialogues discussion generally ends before a satisfactory definition is found? When Wittgenstein was discussing the Socratic dialogues with his friend Drury sometime around 1930, Drury suggested (1984, 116):

> It may be significant that those dialogues in which Socrates is looking for precise definitions end, all of them, without any conclusion. The definition he is looking for isn't reached, but only suggested definitions refuted. This might have been Socrates' ironical way of showing that there was something wrong in looking for one exact meaning of such general terms.

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5 Cf. Russell 1959, 161.

Apparently, Wittgenstein did not pick up on this suggestion at the time. However, much later, in a conversation with his friend Oets Bouwsma (1986, 50; October 19, 1949) Wittgenstein said:

> Now when it comes to those early dialogues, one on courage for instance, one might read and say, 'See, see, we know nothing!' This would, I take it, be wholesome.

The early dialogues generally do end in *aporia* – puzzlement. No definition is found. One might conclude that there *is no* definition to find, or one might conclude that we just have not tried *hard* enough. This latter conclusion seems to be the one that Socrates prefers: the dialogues often end inconclusively because those Socrates is talking with run out of patience. Consider *Euthyphro* 15e ("Some other time, Socrates, for I am in a hurry now and it is time to go"); *Protagoras* 361e ("We will examine these things later, whenever you wish; now it is time to turn our attention elsewhere"); *Republic* 331d (where Cephalus bows out: "I'll hand over the argument to you, as I have to look after the sacrifice" even though he had just come from the sacrifice, see 328c). And the *Symposium* 223d, where Socrates drinks all his companions under the table, and then goes off to spend the rest of the day "just as he always did". In this respect Wittgenstein was *not so unlike* Socrates. As Russell recalled their early discussions (1968, 137):

> He used to come to see me every evening at midnight, and pace up and down my room like a wild beast for three hours in agitated silence. […] I did not like to suggest to him that it was time for bed…

The former conclusion seems to be the conclusion that Drury reached: that *there is no* definition to be found. But after all, there is no way to *show* that a particular term is *in*definable. That would require proving a negative existential claim. At most there could be inductive evidence for such a conclusion. Recall G.E. Moore's discussion of Good (Moore 1903). While he insists that it cannot be defined, his evidence for this is really inductive – none of the proposed definitions succeed. They all fail the 'open question' test. But Moore offers no reason to suppose all possible definitions *must* fail the test. It was only later non-descriptivists, like R.M. Hare (1952), who offered principled arguments against the possibility of a naturalistic definition.

The *Republic* is an interesting dialogue in part precisely because it *does* reach a definition – a definition of 'justice' – that the interlocutors seem to accept. (Not that we are necessarily impressed, or should be!) But it takes a good four 'books' – much longer than the so-called early, Socratic dialogues – to get there. So that may be evidence that a satisfactory definition is just hard to find. And it leaves

open the possibility that Moore just did not try hard enough to define 'good', and Wittgenstein did not try hard enough to define 'game'.

Bernard Suits, for example, takes a whole book to defend his definition of "playing a game" as (Suits 2005, 55) "the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles", or more fully (48-9) "to play a game is to engage in an activity directed towards bringing about a specific state of affairs, using only permitted means by rules, where the rules prohibit more efficient in favour of less efficient means, and where such rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity". What would Wittgenstein say about that?

But I think Wittgenstein would not want to formulate his difference with Socrates as being over whether there really IS a satisfactory essentialist definition of 'game'. Rather, he would (or should) put their difference as being over whether there *needs* to be a satisfactory essentialist definition of 'game'. It is not that Wittgenstein tires of the search (as the interlocutors in the early dialogues did). But rather that he is willing to *rest content* without achieving the outcome that Socrates seeks.

It seems that Wittgenstein's own revelation on this point came in a conversation with his friend Piero Sraffa concerning the nature of language. Here is part of the story, as told by one of Wittgenstein's friends (Malcolm 1984, 57-8):

> Wittgenstein and Sraffa, a lecturer in economics at Cambridge, argued together a great deal over the ideas of the *Tractatus*. One day (they were riding, I think, on a train) when Wittgenstein was insisting that a proposition and that which it describes must have the same 'logical form', [...] Sraffa made a gesture, familiar to Neapolitans as meaning something like disgust or contempt, of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the fingertips of one hand. And he asked: 'What is the logical form of that?' Sraffa's example produced in Wittgenstein the feeling that there was an absurdity in the insistence that a proposition and what it describes must have the same 'form'. This broke the hold on him of the conception that a proposition must literally be a 'picture' of the reality it describes.

The gesture Sraffa used was akin to giving someone the finger. Sraffa's point was that a gesture could convey meaning in the way language does, and yet it does not do so by representing a state of affairs. It does not get meaning by sharing a logical form. Language does not *have* to be representational. Wittgenstein himself testified to Sraffa's 'stimulus' and its impact on his thinking in the Preface to the *Investigations*.

Clearly this gesture (could we call it a 'poetic gesture'?) had a lasting impact that imprinted itself on Wittgenstein. And the anecdote

has had a similar effect on students of Wittgenstein. It opened Wittgenstein up to a new way of thinking. It was more than just an exception or counter-example to a definition of language. It changed his way of thinking, his movement of thought. He let go of the *need* to find the essence of language – and I think, ultimately, the need to find the essence of many a concept.

How might we respond to Socrates' 'movement of thought' here? I think Plato asked himself something like this question. And I propose his own response to Socrates' search for definitions was his 'theory of the forms'. I believe the forms constitute a metaphysical embodiment of the essence that Socrates sought, but in a way that was never fully articulable. Knowledge of the forms required a sort of intellectual apprehension, but without a linguistic articulation. In Book 6 of the *Republic*, introducing the simile of the sun, Socrates says:

> the objects of knowledge [i.e., the forms] not only receive from the presence of the good their being known, but their very existence and essence is derived from it [the form of the good], though the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power. (*Rep.* 509b-c)

Glaucon then makes fun of Socrates for his hyperbole, to which Socrates responds:

> The fault is yours for compelling me to utter my thoughts about it. (*Rep.* 509b-c)

In a sense, the essence remains, even though it can't be stated. The Guardians have a usable understanding of the forms through their extensive training in dialectic, even if it can't be spelled out in words.

A similar pattern of difference between Socrates and Wittgenstein seems to emerge in another context. On December 17, 1930, while in Vienna between academic terms, Wittgenstein met with Moritz Schlick to discuss Schlick's just-published book *Fragen der Ethik* (*Problems of Ethics*). Waismann's notes of the meeting record Wittgenstein's comments (Waismann 1979, 115):

> Schlick says that in theological ethics there used to be two conceptions of the essence of the good: according to the shallower interpretation the good is good because it is what God wants; according to the profounder interpretation God wants the good because it is good. I think that the first interpretation is the profounder one: what God commands, that is good. For it cuts off the way to any explanation 'why' it is good, while the second is the shallow, rationalist one, which proceeds 'as if' you could give reasons for what is good.

The first conception says clearly that the essence of the good has nothing to do with facts and hence cannot be explained by any proposition. If there is any proposition expressing precisely what I think, it is the proposition 'What God commands, that is good.'

It would be hard to find a clearer statement of Euthyphro's position.

In that Platonic dialogue, after Euthyphro has proposed the view (9e) that "the pious is what all the gods love", Socrates asks him this question of conceptual priority (10a): "Is the pious being loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is being loved by the gods?" It is clear what Euthyphro should say – that it is pious because it is being loved by the gods – just what Wittgenstein asserted. But Euthyphro does not understand the question. After a marginally helpful explanation, Socrates returns with the question (10d): "Is it being loved then because it is pious, or for some other reason?" This is clearly a trick question, for it builds in the presupposition that it is being loved *for some reason or other*. Euthyphro does not notice the trick, and quickly answers "For no other reason". After all, if you have to come up with a reason, that seems the most plausible one. When Socrates draws out the unfortunate implication for his view, Euthyphro responds "Apparently". Euthyphro sees something has gone wrong, but can't put his finger on it.

The trick that Socrates plays, the presupposition that he builds in, is precisely the hidden assumption that many of us would accept – that the gods act for reasons, that commands can be justified. Euthyphro should have responded: "For no reason at all, Socrates". That response "cuts off the way to any explanation 'why' it is good". Socrates is so gripped by the urge to justify, that either he does not himself see that he is presupposing that, or else he is cynically using but concealing that presupposition against Euthyphro. In his diary not long after the discussion of Schlick's book, Wittgenstein writes (2003, 83; May 6, 1931):

> 'It is good because God commanded it' is the right expression for the lack of reason [*Grundlosigkeit* – absence of justification].

Here we again see the accuracy of Wittgenstein's remark:

> I can characterize my standpoint no better than by saying that it is the antithetical standpoint to the one occupied by Socrates in the Platonic dialogues.

Wittgenstein stands with Euthyphro and the divine-command tradition in ethics. Where Socrates insists on a reason behind the commands, Wittgenstein is willing to rest content without achieving the outcome that Socrates seeks. In the *Tractatus* Wittgenstein puts his point this way (Wittgenstein 1961, 6.372):

the view of the ancients [like Euthyphro] is clearer in so far as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system [in this case, Schlick] tries to make it look as if *everything* were explained.

The question when to press, or halt, the process of explanation or justification comes up in a variety of contemporary philosophical discussions. Thomas Nagel has an interesting discussion of this issue as it relates to the meaning or absurdity of life. The ability to step back from our life and press for a justification of our activities is one of the things that makes us most human (Nagel 1979, 14-15). This is indeed what Socrates seems to have had in mind when he said (*Apology* 38a): "the unexamined life is not worth living for men". What distinguishes humans from other animals is this very capacity for self-reflection and examination.

Yet absurdity results from this "perpetual possibility of regarding everything about which we are serious as arbitrary" (or at least open to question) from a larger perspective. Nagel thinks that this "collision within ourselves" is best faced with a sense of irony. The only way to avoid this sort of collision of self-consciousness "would be either never to attain it or to forget it – neither of which can be achieved by the will" (Nagel 1979, 13, 17, 21).

Here I can imagine we would again find Wittgenstein at odds with Socrates. Socrates doesn't know when "enough is enough", as we say. "The difficulty here", Wittgenstein says (1967, §314), "is: to stop". While the unexamined life may not be worth living, the endlessly examined life, on the other hand, is not livable. Nagel says that once the issue is raised, we cannot "forget it" through an act of will. But what one can do is willingly submit oneself to a process that might predictably lead one to forget it, or care less about it.

In another dialogue, the *Phaedo*, where Plato (through his character Socrates) is helping his friends face their fear of death, Cebes presses him (77e):

Assuming that we were afraid, Socrates, try to change our minds, or rather do not assume that we are afraid, but perhaps there is a child in us who has these fears; try to persuade him not to fear death like a bogey.

And Socrates replies:

You should [...] sing a charm over him every day until you have charmed away his fears.

'Socrates', or rather Plato, realizes that what is needed is not really an argument, but something closer to a bedtime story. Later he goes on to tell one of those comforting myths that Wittgenstein prefers.

So we find several ways in which Wittgenstein is clearly at odds with Socrates. In each of these cases it is because Socrates wishes to push questions further than his interlocutors – to find something deeper. And in each case, Wittgenstein is willing to rest content with something less, I believe.

In certain ways I think this brings Wittgenstein closer to Plato. I think an important way in which Plato differs from his mentor Socrates is that Plato came to think that Socrates' approach to issues was excessively intellectual. It made too little room for the rest of, the whole, human being. In particular, it left too little room for the emotions. So it is, for example, that Plato's so-called Middle Dialogues had mythical stories in them. Wittgenstein's friend Oets Bouwsma reported a conversation that they had in 1950 (Bouwsma 1986, 61): "Wittgenstein reads Plato – the only philosopher he reads. But he likes the allegories, the myths". Perhaps in the myths Wittgenstein saw the (Wittgenstein 1998, 71; April, 1947) "quite different artillery" that he sought, but never found, in his own work. Earlier he had confessed (Wittgenstein 1998, 28; 1933-34):

> I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one *writes a poem* [dichten]. That, it seems to me, must reveal how far my thinking belongs to the present, the future, or the past. For I was acknowledging myself, with these words, to be someone who cannot quite do what he would like to be able to do.

One striking similarity between Plato and Wittgenstein is that both employ the dialogue format – Plato almost always; Wittgenstein at least sometimes in the *Philosophical Investigations* (and elsewhere). There has been a great deal of work done on 'characterization' in Plato's dialogues (e.g. Blondell, 2002). A whole book has even been written on who the people were that make appearances in the dialogues (see Nails 2002). The dialogue format makes clear how philosophy is for Socrates an *ad hominem* activity. Socrates is not interested in philosophical theories in the abstract. He is interested in what a particular person believes, and how that fits with other things that person believes. His method of *elenchus* (or refutation) only works to show the inconsistency of a set of beliefs all held *by the same person*. This is supposed to have a special motivational force since an inconsistent set of beliefs cannot all be true, and if I am the one that holds all those beliefs, then I am holding at least one false belief. If I were to try to refute you by showing that one of your beliefs is inconsistent with some other belief that *I* hold, that is likely to have much less interest to you, since you can simply assume that I am the one holding the false belief.

But Plato's dialogue format is interesting for another reason. We generally know a good bit about Socrates' interlocutors. So we can

see how emotion and circumstance can influence belief. While Socrates himself seems to want his interlocutors to rise above these peculiarities of circumstance and attend to the pure rationality of the argument, the reader can see the limitations of this approach. And especially for readers who are familiar with ancient Greek history – in particular Plato's own contemporary readers, who would have known, or known of, the people talking with Socrates – it is possible to see how the views that the interlocutors held played out in their own lives.

One example of this is the conversation with Cephalus and Polemarchus in Book I of the *Republic* (see Gifford 2001). Plato's readers would have known that Cephalus was an arms manufacturer in Athens whose weaponry supplied Athens with the means to pursue its doomed ambitions in the war with Sparta. Of course, he was paid for these arms by the democratic regime, so he was giving what was owed to madmen – the Athenian democrats – who were causing great harm through this otherwise just deal. So Cephalus's life itself constituted the very counter-example that Socrates raised (331c, 332a). But that's not all. His son Polemarchus, who "inherited the argument" (331d) from his father, also inherited his guilt. For when the Thirty Tyrants took power in the aftermath of Athens' defeat, they took revenge by summarily executing this son, Polemarchus. Of course, Polemarchus was the one who had advocated the traditional view that justice required "helping friends and harming enemies' (332a-b). And it was this very principle on which the Tyrants acted, since he and his family were an enemy of the regime, in executing him. So Polemarchus died at the hands of his own faulty principle of justice.

A similar dramatic strategy is employed by Dostoevsky, especially in the *Brothers Karamazov* (Dostoevsky 1992), in which Dostoevsky shows us in the lives of his characters the flaws in the views advocated by those characters. E.g., we witness the disintegration of Ivan's life lived according to the rejection of God.

Wittgenstein criticized Plato's dialogical approach in an interesting way. In the conversation with Bouwsma we read (1986, 60):

Plato's arguments! His pretense of discussion! The Socratic irony! The Socratic method! The arguments were bad, the pretense of discussion too obvious, the Socratic irony distasteful – why can't a man be forthright and say what's on his mind? As for the Socratic method in the dialogues, it simply isn't there. The interlocutors are ninnies, never any arguments of their own, say 'Yes' and 'No' as Socrates pleases they should. They are a stupid lot. Perhaps Plato is no good, perhaps he's very good. How should I know? But if he is good, he's doing something which is foreign to us. We do not understand. Perhaps if I could read Greek!

Or perhaps if he knew more about Greek history!

I do sympathize with his criticism of the interlocutors as 'yes-men'. In fact, I have created an assignment for my Ancient Greek Philosophy classes in which students choose portions of the dialogues and rewrite them, giving the interlocutors better lines – and then act them out. I find that the students do very well with this.

But Wittgenstein's understanding of irony here is rather shallow. Of course, there is the surface irony, where Socrates patronizes his interlocutors by pretending to want to learn from them. But there is also a deeper irony – perhaps we should call it *Platonic* irony – in which Plato undermines Socrates' interlocutors. This is very much a part of the dialogic method. And it comes from Plato's wider understanding of the problems of argument. Socrates failed in his attempts to change people. We can see that by the fact that the people he tried to change ended up executing him.

Indeed, it is not clear that we can point to *any* characters in the dialogues who are improved by their contact with Socrates – with the possible exception of Euthyphro, at least according to Diogenes Laertius (2.29): "When Euthyphro had indicted his own father for the murder of a foreigner, Socrates, after conversing with him about piety, dissuaded him from his course".[6] But Plato may have opened up a new way of addressing issues by way of engaging the whole person – the person's life and not just the person's intellect.

Wittgenstein does not write in an obviously dialogical fashion. But much of the *Philosophical Investigations* lends itself to that interpretation. For occasionally there are lines put in quotation marks or between dashes – seeming to suggest another voice entering the train of thought. Stanley Cavell has written (1976, 71): "The voice of temptation and the voice of correctness are the antagonists in Wittgenstein's dialogues". And further research (Stern 2004, 22ff) has claimed to identify a "commentator" – a third "ironic" voice – in addition to voices variously identified as "narratorial", and "interlocutory".

Seeing the *Investigations* as a sort of dialogue has not been straightforward, because it has very few of the markings of a dialogue – most importantly, no characters are named. Names alone may accomplish rather little, though Nails does a lot with the historical associations of names mentioned in Plato's dialogues. But a case can be made – I have tried to make it in Chapter 2 of my book, *Wittgenstein's Artillery* (Klagge 2021) – that the style of the *Philosophical Investigations* owes a lot to Wittgenstein's experience in the classroom at Cambridge. In some particular cases it is possible to trace voices that Wittgenstein addresses to points raised by students in class – such as, "a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it" (Wittgenstein 1958,

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6 Transl. by Mensch 2020, 56.

1; 1993, 52) and "the picture of a visible [infinite] series, the whole of which one person [God] can survey and another can't..." (Wittgenstein 2009, § 352; McGuinness 2016, 241; and Black 2014, 55-7).

In G.E. Moore's full notes for the academic year 1932-33 (Wittgenstein 2016, 175-365) there are well over 120 instances where Wittgenstein is reported to preface comments with endless variations of 'it will be said', 'suppose one wanted to ask', 'people will say', 'you may answer', 'suppose somebody says', etc. All of these prefixes couch the discussion in the subjunctive mood. That is, they present ideas for consideration, rather than as assertions. They create a hypothetical conversation – a sort of dialogue.

Whether these phrases report things that have arisen from class discussion or not is impossible to tell, though we know they do at least sometimes. A comparison with the *Philosophical Investigations* is instructive. In addition to the numerous well-known places where the interlocutor speaks in quotation marks or within dashes, there are also many dozens of places where Wittgenstein uses these very same phrases: 'one might ask', 'you may say', 'someone says to me', 'one might object here', 'suppose it were asked', etc. So, by 1933 Wittgenstein had begun to think, in his lectures, in the dialogical fashion later exhibited in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

How we conceive of the dialogical character of the *Investigations* could well depend on what sort of picture *of Wittgenstein* has 'held *us* captive'. If one is captivated by a picture of Wittgenstein alone at his desk, pen in hand, agonizing over a subject, then it is natural to think of the voices largely as expressions from within himself. But if one thinks instead of Wittgenstein in front of a classroom of students, chalk or poker in hand, then it may seem natural to think of the voices as arising from the discussions with students.

The interpretation of Plato's dialogues raises the question of whether or when one can attribute a view to Socrates or Plato based on the fact that the character 'Socrates' makes an assertion. A similar problem arises with the *Investigations*. Just because a sentence appears in it, does not mean that Wittgenstein is asserting that. This is a problem that arises for students in both my Greek Philosophy course and my Wittgenstein course.

A value of the, at least somewhat, dialogical character of the *Investigations* is that it is a means to address some of the non-cognitive aspects of belief formation and argumentation, and to personalize that address. This is connected with what I call Wittgenstein's "evangelism", in my book *Wittgenstein's Artillery* (Klagge 2021, ch. 1). It has to be noted that in the Preface to the *Investigations* Wittgenstein confesses that he did *not* find his book to be successful, and had given up on trying to improve it.

But one might wonder how it could be changed. Could Wittgenstein have written a dialogical book in which there was a clearer sense of

what or who the voices were? As it is, they come off as anonymous voices. Might they take on more identity and character, say, as part of a narrative? Might this have given Wittgenstein more traction in engaging viewpoints that he found uncongenial? I wonder. Or perhaps engaging the non-cognitive aspects of his readers would have required him to 'write philosophy only as one *writes a poem*', and that was just what he found that he could not quite do.

In "the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry" (*Rep.* 607B), we can see Wittgenstein wishing to side *against* Socrates but, I would say, *with* Plato – who found ways of making philosophy poetic. However, Wittgenstein expresses the feeling that he is yet unable to participate in the quarrel except on Socrates' terms: "Quite different artillery is needed here from anything I am in a position to muster", Wittgenstein confesses. That, I believe, is the tragic turn in Wittgenstein's work.

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What Does 'To Know Something' Mean?
Plato and Wittgenstein on the Grammar of Knowledge

Anthony Bonnemaison
École Normale Supérieure de Paris, France

Abstract   This paper provides an attempt to read some important aspects of Plato's thought in the light of Wittgenstein's analyses of the grammar (i.e. the ordinary linguistic uses) of knowledge. It focuses mainly on the infallibility of knowledge. Far from being specifically Platonic or even philosophical, infallibility belongs to the language-game of knowledge. My aim is to show that Plato makes a subtle use of this linguistic resource to justify his own ethical, epistemological and ontological views. Finally, I briefly compare the way in which each of the two philosophers understands the grammar of knowledge.

Keywords   Plato. Wittgenstein. Grammar. Knowledge. Language. Ontology. Infallibility

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 How to Talk Correctly About Experts? Non-Platonic Occurrences of the Infallibility of Knowledge. – 2.1 Pre-Platonic Literature. – 2.2 Non-Platonic Occurrences in Plato's Dialogues. – 3 Plato on the Infallibility of Knowledge: "A Whole Cloud of Philosophy Condensed into a Drop of Grammar" (*PI* II xi, 222). – 3.1 Good Fortune and Wisdom in the *Euthydemus*. – 3.2 Knowledge, Opinion and Forms in the *Republic*: Grammar or Ontology?. – 3.2.1 Knowledge Is Set Over 'What Is'. – 3.2.2 Opinion, Knowledge and Infallibility: A Decisive Grammatical Point. – 4 Plato and Wittgenstein on the Grammar of Knowledge. – 4.1 Wittgenstein on Knowledge and Certainty. – 4.2 Plato and Wittgenstein: Expert Knowledge VS Ordinary Knowledge. – 5 Conclusion: What Philosophical Use Should be Made of the Grammar of Knowledge?

1 Introduction

From the 1930s onwards, Ludwig Wittgenstein renews his approach to philosophical problems and formulates a decisive criticism of any kind of essentialist and foundationalist undertaking in philosophy. Such a criticism affects both Plato and all contemporary forms of Platonism, including Wittgenstein's first work, the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, still influenced by the Platonism of Frege. On the ontological level, the concept of family resemblance (*Philosophical Investigations* [= *PI*], § 65 ff.) allows him to account for the unity of a concept without implying an immutable essence. On the epistemological one, instead, he rejects any attempt to ground knowledge on certainties that are entirely exempt from doubt. This is most apparent in his last work, *On Certainty* (= *OC*), where he discusses George Edward Moore's attempt to refute scepticism and idealism. He shows through a fine analysis of the grammar of knowledge (i.e. the concrete ordinary uses of verbs designating knowledge)[1] that a certainty of which I cannot doubt is not knowledge but the framework within which other statements can be questioned or confirmed.

Plato makes intelligible Forms the condition of infallible knowledge entirely free from error, and therefore seems to perfectly represent the two pitfalls denounced by Wittgenstein, as well as failure to pay sufficient attention to the ordinary uses of language.[2] Yet, if we take a closer look, Plato also gives great importance to the grammar of knowledge at key points of the dialogues. The aim of this paper is to show that the difference between Wittgenstein and Plato does not lie in the consideration or absence of consideration of the grammar of knowledge, but rather in a different understanding and use of ordinary ways of speaking.[3]

I shall mainly focus on one aspect of the Platonic conception of knowledge, namely its infallibility. This is indeed a very important property for understanding Plato's thought, and it is the one that Wittgenstein directly challenges in his reflections on knowledge. I will

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1 On the importance of grammar in Wittgenstein's thought see Garver 1996, who describes grammar as "distinctive uses of language, or language-games, with which key words are associated" (142). See also the famous claims of the *PI* §§ 371-3. In what follows, quotations of *PI* are from Anscombe 1986, and those of *OC* are from Anscombe, von Wright 1969.

2 The *Cratylus* seems paradigmatic in this respect: Socrates, far from sticking to the usual meaning of words, invents fanciful and contradictory etymologies (see 411d-412b and 437a-c on knowledge), and concludes that it is better to investigate things and learn about them through themselves than to do so through their names (439a-b).

3 Many comparisons between Plato and Wittgenstein have already been fruitfully explored in Perissinotto, Ramón Cámara 2013. For another (and more systematic) attempt to bridge the gap between Plato's thought and Wittgenstein's later philosophy, see Schneider 2002.

first argue that this idea is not specifically Platonic or even philosophical: it can be found in pre-Platonic literature, as well as in several characters of the dialogues who are not philosophers[4]. It is therefore a feature commonly associated with words designating knowledge in Greek, upon which Plato relies to elaborate his own views. This is particularly the case in a famous and disputed passage of *Republic* 5. To finish, I will compare Plato's and Wittgenstein's understanding and use of the grammar of knowledge.

Before I begin discussion, I would like to make a lexical precision. As often pointed out, verbs designating knowledge in Greek are not easy to distinguish before and in Plato. Burnyeat 2011, drawing on the structural analyses of Lyons 1963, showed it is impossible to establish a one-to-one correlation between terms such as ἐπιστήμη, γνῶσις or τέχνη on the one hand, and different kinds of knowledge (such as knowing that, how or by acquaintance) on the other hand. This is why infallibility can be applied to different Greek words in Plato: ἐπιστήμη and σοφία mainly, but also δημιουργία, ἀρχή or νοῦς. Although these words can have different meanings, and shall be translated differently, my purpose is only to underline their common feature (infallibility). For these reasons, I will reduce to the minimum discussions on their respective meanings, and use 'knowledge' as the generic term that encompasses all of them.[5]

2 How to Talk Correctly About Experts? Non-Platonic Occurrences of the Infallibility of Knowledge

At the end of Book 5 of the *Republic*, Socrates demonstrates to Glaucon that the distinction between opinion and knowledge entails the distinction between particular things and Forms. The distinction between opinion and knowledge is itself established from their properties: knowledge is infallible, while opinion is fallible (477e). James Adam comments: "The infallibility of knowledge is a cardinal principle with Plato".[6] But is it specifically Platonic, or even theoretical? It is indeed important to note that this last argument is not Socrates', but Glaucon's. Even though Glaucon is Socrates' friend and has, compared to his brother Adeimantus, "the more philosophical outlook",[7]

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[4] Thus by 'not philosophical' I mean that this idea is not grounded in any particular philosophical theory, nor is it justified by any demonstration or rational argument.

[5] I do not assume here that knowledge is distinct from understanding or science. On this debate and its influence on Plato's commentators, see Schwab 2015. On the more general tendency among commentators to apply contemporary epistemological categories to Plato, see Moss 2021.

[6] Adam 1938, 340. See also Ketchum 1987.

[7] Burnyeat 1997, 13.

one should not assume he adopts here any philosophical point of view: as will be shown later in more details, he is answering in the name of the sight-lovers, i.e the non-philosophers who resist the distinction between Forms and perceptible things. Why then should it be so obvious to Glaucon and the sight-lovers that knowledge differs from opinion for this reason? My aim in this section is to demonstrate that it is one of the most ordinary ways of speaking about knowledge, or to say it differently, that it is part of the language-game of knowledge. The infallibility of knowledge is often used as an argument by Socrates' interlocutors, and the same principle can be found in pre-Platonic literature.

2.1 Pre-Platonic Literature

Near the end of Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Hermes comes to Prometheus with a message from Zeus: he either reveals the secret about the marriage that threatens Zeus, or he will endure great punishment. In front of Prometheus' stubbornness, the Chorus advises him to follow Hermes and not disobeying Zeus (v. 1039): "Follow this advice: it is shameful for the wise to err (σοφῷ γὰρ αἰσχρὸν ἐξαμαρτάνειν)".[8] Griffith (1983, 269) rightly comments: "Once again, P. is criticised for 'failure' (ἐξαμαρτάνειν) to make effective use of his σοφία". Knowledge or wisdom entails – at least in principle – infallibility in taking good decisions. But as Prometheus refuses to take the right decision, he may not be called the wise man he is supposed to be. The Chorus highlights a tension between the way Prometheus is usually characterised and his attitude: in this context he should not be called wise.

One finds a similar reasoning in Gorgias' *Defence of Palamedes* (§§ 25-6). To dismiss Odysseus' accusation of betrayal, one of Palamedes' arguments is the following: Odysseus accuses him of two directly opposed things, knowledge (σοφία, for being artful, clever and resourceful) and madness (for having betrayed Greece). Does Odysseus think that wise and knowledgeable men are witless, or intelligent?

> If witless, your speech is novel, but not true; if intelligent, surely it is not right for intelligent men to make the worst mistakes and to prefer evils to present goods. If therefore I am wise, I have not erred; if I have erred, I am not wise (εἰ μὲν οὖν εἰμι σοφός, οὐχ ἥμαρτον· εἰ δ' ἥμαρτον, οὐ σοφός εἰμι). Thus in both cases you would be wrong.[9]

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8 Transl. by Sommerstein 2009.
9 Transl. by Kennedy in Sprague 1972.

The chiastic structure of Palamedes' conclusive formula perfectly illustrates the close association between knowledge and infallibility in Greek: if Palamedes really is a knowledgeable man, he cannot have made such a mistake. He argues that we would never call σοφός a man that makes or could make some mistake; in that case, he would have to be called otherwise, and this is why Odysseus is wrong.

2.2 Non-Platonic Occurrences in Plato's Dialogues

At *Meno* 97c6-8, Meno makes the following distinction between true opinion and knowledge:

> the man who has knowledge (ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἔχων) will always succeed (ἀεὶ ἂν ἐπιτυγχάνοι), whereas he who has true opinion (ὁ δὲ τὴν ὀρθὴν δόξαν) will only succeed at times.[10]

He is immediately corrected by Socrates: he who has a right opinion will always succeed, as long as his opinion is right.[11] Meno has thus confused opinion (which can be true or false, and can therefore fail) with right opinion (which, as long as it is right, cannot fail). Yet the passage clearly shows that the words 'opinion' and 'knowledge' are to be used under different circumstances and cannot be confused: 'knowledge' should only be used to designate an infallible man; if not, it should rather be called (true) 'opinion'.[12] As we shall see later, the difference between knowledge and opinion is crucial in Plato's own thought.

In the beginning of the *Republic*, the sophist Thrasymachus also associates the words designing knowledge and expertise with infallibility:

> no craftsman, expert, or ruler makes an error (δημιουργὸς ἢ σοφὸς ἢ ἄρχων οὐδεὶς ἁμαρτάνει) at the moment when he is ruling, even though everyone will say that a physician or a ruler makes errors. (340e4-5)

He does so in order to challenge Socrates' objection that rulers sometimes order what is bad for themselves, so that the just is not always

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10   Translations of Plato are from Cooper 1997.

11   See also *Theaetetus* 200e.

12   In a similar vein, see Isocrates' *Antidosis* (271): human nature cannot attain a knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) by having which we can know perfectly what should be said or done, and all we can do is to have the best possible opinions to hit on what is best for the most part.

the advantage of the stronger. Thrasymachus' basic idea is that the man who possesses knowledge, like a doctor, an accountant or a grammarian,

> insofar as he is what we call him, never errs (καθ' ὅσον τοῦτ' ἔστιν ὃ προσαγορεύομεν αὐτόν, οὐδέποτε ἁμαρτάνει), so that, according to the precise account (κατὰ τὸν ἀκριβῆ λόγον) [...], no craftsman (οὐδεὶς τῶν δημιουργῶν) ever errs. (340d8-e3)

The expert and knowledgeable man, *qua* expert and knowledgeable, is infallible. When he makes an error, as it sometimes happens, it is because "knowledge fails him" (340e3 ἐπιλειπούσης γὰρ ἐπιστήμης), and in regard to that error he is no expert. But the one who possesses knowledge never fails. At first sight, one could think that Thrasymachus intends to correct our ordinary ways of speaking (when we say for instance that a doctor, or whatever expert, has made an error) in the name of logic (it is a conceptual truth that an expert is infallible, because success is analytically included in the concept of expertise). However, it is very important to note his appeal to our ways of speaking. He first asks Socrates if he calls (340d3 καλεῖς) a doctor someone who makes an error in the treatment of patients. Then he argues from the way we name (340e1 προσαγορεύομεν) certain people: if we use specific names to designate their knowledge and mastery of a particular field, it should be clear that these names are not to be associated with other words designating failure and error. He then opposes two ways of *talking* about experts, and distinguishes them according to their accuracy: his argument relies on language rather than logic.[13] More precisely, he relies on the common way of speaking about wise and knowledgeable men previously analysed.

One can add the beginning of the *Theaetetus*, where Socrates refers to the infallibility of knowledge in order to justify a theory of knowledge that is contrary to his views. Infallibility indeed allows Socrates to assimilate Theaetetus' definition of knowledge (knowledge is perception) with Protagoras' famous thesis ("man is the measure of all things") and to justify them both. If, according to Protagoras, things are for each individual as he perceives them, then perception "is always of what is (τοῦ ὄντος ἀεί ἐστιν), and unerring – as befits knowledge (ἀψευδὲς ὡς ἐπιστήμη οὖσα)" (152c5-6). In a Protagorean perspective, what appears to each individual through perception is

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13 It is important to remind that Thrasymachus is also well-known as a master of rhetoric, in which he might have been an innovator. See *Phaedrus* 267c. The correctness of names and words is a well-known and important part of sophistic thought, which explains why Thrasymachus pays so much attention to language and names in particular. On language in the sophistic movement, see Kerferd 1981, chs. 7-8.

strictly relative and irreducible to what appears to other individuals, and nothing exists beyond what appears to each of them. This is why perception is always of what is and cannot be false. This unique feature (infallibility, being always true) allows Socrates to justify Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception, which proves that it is the most obvious characteristic of what is called knowledge (ἐπιστήμη).[14]

To recap this first section, the infallibility of knowledge is not a specific Platonic feature: it appears before Plato, both in tragedy and rhetoric speeches, and is sometimes used in Plato's dialogue to develop un-Platonic views[15]. What's more, these texts insist on the way we use words under certain circumstances, arguing that one cannot (or should not) call 'wise' or 'knowledgeable' someone who can make mistakes. Infallibility is therefore one of the most salient aspects of the language-game of knowledge: it determines the contexts in which someone can be called a wise or knowledgeable man. When Plato makes use of this same principle to elaborate his own views, he is thus part of a tradition that is not specifically philosophical or even theoretical[16]. He rather makes, as I shall argue, grammatical points (in Wittgenstein's wording): he underlines what it means and implies to use specific words designating knowledge in certain contexts.

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14 Socrates clarifies this point in the *Gorgias*: conviction has to be distinguished from knowledge on the ground that there is "such a thing as true and false conviction (πίστις ψευδὴς καὶ ἀληθής)", whereas there is not "such a thing as true and false knowledge (ἐπιστήμη ἐστὶν ψευδὴς καὶ ἀληθής)" (454d5-7). The linguistic distinction between knowledge and conviction (or opinion) is rooted in the way it can be associated or not with other words such as 'true' and 'false' in sentences that make sense.

15 One could add Parmenides' fr. 1 (v. 27ff) and fr. 8 (v. 50), but it is already a philosophical version of the infallibility. It should also be noticed that the first example of σοφία in literature (*Iliad* 15.412) is very close to the idea of infallibility: it is the comparison of lines formed by the Achaeans and the Trojans with the perfect line drawn by a carpenter "who knows well all wisdom" (πάσης εὖ εἰδῇ σοφίης) through the promptings of Athens. The very idea of perfection and the reference to mastery of "all wisdom" recalls infallibility. On this passage (as not being restricted to skill in the crafts), see Kerferd 1976.

16 Hintikka 1967, 7 draws a similar conclusion from his analysis of Aristotle's statements about ἐπιστήμη. See *Nicomachean Ethics* 1139b19-22 and *Posterior analytics* 89a6-8: Aristotle argues from what we all suppose about knowledge and claims that knowledge and opinion must be distinguished on the grounds that knowledge is always of what cannot be otherwise, whereas no one says that he opines when he thinks that it is impossible for it to be otherwise.

3 Plato on the Infallibility of Knowledge: "A Whole Cloud of Philosophy Condensed into a Drop of Grammar" (*PI* II xi, 222)

The aim of this section is to show that Plato's use of the grammar of knowledge is key to understanding very important arguments of the dialogues. This is the reason why I suggest applying Wittgenstein's well-known formula in the *Philosophical Investigations* to Plato. Plato indeed argues from the grammar of knowledge in order to prove some of his most important theses on happiness or ontology. Moreover, reading these controversial passages as relying on the grammar of knowledge ought to help clarify how they work.

3.1 Good Fortune and Wisdom in the *Euthydemus*

In the *Euthydemus*, the infallibility of knowledge is a key premise of Socrates' exhortation to philosophy. After having enumerated what most people regard as good, he aims to show Clinias that success or good fortune (εὐτυχία) is not a separate good, inasmuch as it is included in wisdom (σοφία) (279c-d). The young man is amazed, and Socrates clarifies what he means with examples: in music, as well as writing, reading, sailing or war, success is ensured by wise men, not by the ignorant ones (279e-280a). From those examples he draws a general conclusion:

> So wisdom makes men fortunate in every case, since I don't suppose she would ever make any sort of mistake (οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἁμαρτάνοι γ᾽ ἄν ποτέ τι σοφία) but must necessarily do right and be lucky (ἀλλ᾽ ἀνάγκη ὀρθῶς πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν) – otherwise she would no longer be wisdom (ἢ γὰρ ἂν οὐκέτι σοφία εἴη). (280a6-8)

Clinias spontaneously distinguishes knowledge from good fortune. But when Socrates reminds him that wisdom is essential to good fortune, since wisdom excludes error, the young man readily agrees to recognise that good fortune is not a good *per se* and that it is nothing more than wisdom.[17] According to some scholars, Socrates elaborates here a very rationalist conception of happiness.[18] However, in the light of the previous analyses, it would be more accurate to say

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[17] In the following lines, Socrates goes further and argues that wisdom is the only true good (280b-281e). Although more implicitly, he still relies on the association between knowledge and success, especially when he demonstrates that science (ἐπιστήμη) is the condition of the right use of all goods (281a-b). This passage also confirms that Plato uses different words such as ἐπιστήμη and σοφία (he adds φρόνησις at 281b6) to name one and the same thing, i.e. a superior cognitive condition.

[18] Canto 1989, 66.

that Socrates relies on what it (commonly) means to talk about wisdom and wise men in order to ground his philosophical view about the good. I assume that Plato does not see himself as being overly rational. In his view, our ordinary ways of speaking rather entail a rationalist conception of happiness, for if we really mean what we say when we talk of wisdom, then happiness is above all a matter of knowledge.

The linguistic background of Socrates' argument should also prevent us from concluding that the argument is fallacious. Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi (2014, 19-20) argues that Socrates' generalisation from particular expertise to wisdom in general is flawed, so that it is not possible to reduce good-fortune to wisdom. But from the previous analyses we know that infallibility is very commonly associated with perfect wisdom, and that what is fallible cannot be called wisdom in any way. Therefore, Socrates only makes explicit under what circumstances we talk about wisdom. And far from making an abusive generalisation, he justifies his previous particular examples by showing that they perfectly fit with the meaning of 'wisdom'.

3.2 Knowledge, Opinion and Forms in the *Republic*: Grammar or Ontology?

We have seen Plato using the infallibility commonly associated with knowledge in order to justify his own views. But what is such knowledge about? Plato's answer is famous: intelligible Forms which are distinct from perceptible realities. For many readers, no thesis is more distinctively Platonic than this one. And this is true. Yet I would like to stress that in Plato's view, the distinction between two kinds of beings stems from the very point of grammar we have been analysing so far.

The end of *Republic* 5 aims at justifying Socrates' claim that philosophers should be kings or kings philosophers (473d-e). What is a philosopher? Not a lover of any kind of knowledge, but a lover of the perfect truth belonging to Forms. Socrates' demonstration is twofold. In the first place, he argues from ontological premises well known by Glaucon, i.e. from the distinction between particular things (like beautiful things) and Forms (like Beauty itself) (475e-476d). However, this first stage of the argument requires recognising – as Glaucon does, because he is familiar with Socrates – the existence of intelligible Forms beyond appearances, which is precisely what the sight-lovers deny. Another argument is needed, whose premises can be shared by the sight-lovers, i.e. by popular opinion.

The first argument goes from ontology to epistemology. The second argument (476e-478e) works in the opposite direction: it starts from what it means to know something and deduces that being (Forms) is different from what merely appears. This latter argument is as fa-

mous as he is controversial. Without claiming to resolve all the issues raised by this passage, I shall only focus on the key role played by the infallibility of knowledge, which proves that Plato intends to demonstrate the necessity of setting up intelligible Forms from the ordinary way of speaking about knowledge: accepting Socrates' thesis should require nothing more than the ability to speak Greek consequently. Or, to put it otherwise: sticking to the grammar of knowledge should help us in recognising intelligible realities.

3.2.1 Knowledge Is Set Over 'What Is'

As noticed by some scholars, Socrates' way of arguing with the sight-lovers is very close to that of the above mentioned passage of the *Theaetetus*: in both dialogues one finds these two key premises: knowledge is set over 'what is', and it is infallible.[19] Most scholars tend to give more weight to the ontological premise (about being), and to read the argument in the *Republic* as mainly ontological.[20] As a consequence, debates have focused on the meaning of 'what is', with four main options: an existential sense, a veridical sense, a predicative sense, or whatever combination of them.[21] It is not my purpose here to determine whether Plato presupposes a specific ontology in this argument, and which one it is, but rather to show that the demonstration is not achieved until it is secured by the grammatical point on the distinction between opinion and knowledge, itself justified by the infallibility of knowledge.

Socrates starts from a very general claim: knowledge is always set over something that is, for what is absolutely not cannot be known.[22] From this he draws the conclusion that what is completely (or purely) is completely knowledgeable, whereas what lies between being and non-being must correspond to opinion (477a-b). But Socrates' reasoning is purely hypothetical: *if* (477a6, 477b1 εἰ) there is something in between what is and what is not, then in that case it must correspond to opinion, whereas what is purely corresponds to knowledge. So far, Socrates has only shown that if such an ontological distinction existed, it should correspond to the one between opinion and knowledge.

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19 Cornford 1935, 29; Burnyeat 1990, 8.

20 See especially Moss 2021.

21 See among many others the summaries in Annas 1981, 195-200 and Moss 2021, 93-5. Moss defends a very general reading of 'being' as 'ontological superiority', compatible with many other interpretations.

22 This feature is not specific to knowledge. At *Parmenides* 132b-c it is also the case with thought (νόημα), and at *Sophist* 262e it turns out to be a basic requirement for all speech (λόγος). See also *Sophist* 237d, where it is made explicit why knowing *something* (τι) implies knowing something that *is* (ὄν).

But the ontological distinction has not been justified, and at this stage the sight-lovers are not convinced: they can agree that knowledge is of 'what is completely', and consists in knowing it as it is, but in their view a particular thing is already completely what it is. They could object that the distinction between 'what is intermediate between being and non-being' and 'what is completely' is spurious.

This is why, from 477c onwards, Socrates makes a detour and focuses on powers: this is the only way to get the sight-lovers on his side by pointing out that their own way of speaking about knowledge entails the ontological distinction.

3.2.2 Opinion, Knowledge and Infallibility: A Decisive Grammatical Point

Two powers are distinguished both by their effect (what they accomplish) and their object.[23] Knowledge and opinion are both powers, but they accomplish different things, as Glaucon explains:

> How could a person with any understanding think that a fallible power is the same as an infallible one (τό γε ἀναμάρτητον τῷ μὴ ἀναμαρτήτῳ ταὐτόν)? (477e7-8)

Knowledge is infallible, whereas opinion is fallible: these two words (knowledge and opinion) cannot be used in the same contexts or to name the same cognitive states, and this is enough to discriminate them from one another. As a consequence, knowledge and opinion must have two distinct objects and cannot overlap: knowledge is about 'what is' (being), opinion is about what lies between being and non-being, also named "the opinable" (478e3 δοξαστόν).[24] This last conclusion is established by the combination of the above two arguments: on the one hand opinion, like knowledge, is also set over something that is, for it is impossible to opine what is not (478b5-10); but on the other hand and given the distinction between opinion and knowledge, opinion and knowledge cannot have the same object. And since opinion accomplishes something intermediate between knowledge and ignorance, it must be set over something "intermediate between what purely is and what in every way is not" (478c-d). Socrates

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[23] For instance, sight is the power of perceiving color, hearing the power of perceiving sound, touch the power of perceiving hardness (477c, 507a-c, 524a). Stokes 1992, 118-23 rightly emphasises the importance of sight and hearing to convince the sight-lovers from premises they can admit.

[24] A well-known difficulty is that, if knowledge and opinion have separate objects, the political role played by the philosopher is very hard to understand. However, these difficulties can be overcome, as argued by Moss 2021.

can now justify the previous shift from 'what is' to 'what is complete-ly': it stems from what even the sight-lovers must agree, i.e. the sharp distinction between opinion and knowledge.

The distinction between opinion and knowledge is therefore at the core of the overall argument, and it is justified by the grammar of knowledge (in this case, that one cannot name two cognitive abil-ities with such different effects in the same way). This point is not specifically philosophical, as confirmed by the fact that it is put in Glaucon's mouth. We can now better understand why Plato thinks the sight-lovers should be convinced: Plato's demonstration of the distinc-tion between Forms and particular things intends to be drawn from our ordinary ways of speaking about knowledge.[25]

4 Plato and Wittgenstein on the Grammar of Knowledge

I hope to have shown that in *Republic* 5 and elsewhere Plato is far from neglecting ordinary language when he establishes his most provocative theses. But in that case, how can it be explained that he draws conclusions diametrically opposed to those of Wittgenstein?

4.1 Wittgenstein on Knowledge and Certainty

According to Wittgenstein, philosophers tend to cut language from its natural roots, i.e. from its use in various contexts,[26] and Moore's common sense philosophy is no exception. In Moore's view, we know with certainty a number of empirical propositions we cannot prove, such as the present existence of our body, the fact that earth had ex-isted for many years before us, the birth and death of other human beings, and a series of truisms of this kind. Against both skeptics and idealists, Moore holds that these truisms are not mere beliefs, but knowledge of the most perfect kind.[27]

Wittgenstein objects that Moore's self-evident propositions do not correspond to the grammar of knowledge, but to that of certainty.[28]

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[25] Even though they do not state it so explicitly, Cornford 1935, 176 and Dixsaut 2003, 73 are close to my own reading when they read the *Republic* argument on knowl-edge in the light of the above mentioned passage of the *Gorgias* on the impossibility of false knowledge.

[26] *PI* § 116.

[27] Moore 1959.

[28] In doing so, Wittgenstein rejects Moore's psychological approach to certainty. It is indeed important to note that Moore's notion of certainty is psychological, whereas Wittgenstein's one is not: for the latter, certainty comes from the particular function the propositions play in a given language.

This is the reason why, even though I cannot doubt that "there is one hand" when I raise my hand (this is Moore's premise of his proof of the external world) I cannot say that I *know* it without making a strange and unusual – a philosophical – use of 'I know' (*OC* § 481). We say that we know something when 1) we can say how we know it (§§ 40; 91; 243; 484) and 2) when it remains the possibility of a doubt (§§ 21; 58).[29] This last point is clarified when Wittgenstein distinguishes the grammar of knowledge from the grammar of certainty (§ 308): Moore should not have said that he *knows* his propositions, but that these propositions are solid for us (§ 112), that it stands fast for us (§§ 116; 151), or that it is an irreversible belief (§ 245). What is certain beyond doubt (§ 194) is not knowledge but certainty: a knowledge-claim is always subject to doubt and confirmation, whereas certainty provides the foundation for all our statements about what we know without being itself true or false (§§ 403; 411; 446).[30]

One finds a similar conclusion in the *Philosophical Investigations* (§ 246): it does not make sense to say of me that I know (with perfect certainty) I am in pain, for in that case it would have to make sense to say that I don't know it, that I doubt about it, or that I have learned my sensations (which we never say).[31] As Hacker well formulates, "such a proposition [expressing knowledge] and its negation constitute a logical space: the sense of one stands or falls with the other".[32] This is why it is wrong, or nonsensical, to say that I know my sensations, whereas (for the same reasons) it makes sense for others to say they know I am in pain under certain circumstances.

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29   Marrou 2006, 26-33. In parallel with *OC* § 58, see *Blue Book* (= *BB*) § 54: where 'I don't know' does not make sense, 'I know' cannot make sense either. In Wittgenstein's view, truth can only be said of propositions, and knowledge can only be said of bipolar propositions (capable of being either true or false). More broadly, a "proposition makes sense if and only if its negation makes sense" (Garver 1996, 148-9; but see the discussion of this view in Coliva 2013).

30   On the analogy with 'hinges' Wittgenstein uses to describe this phenomenon (*OC* §§ 341-3), see Coliva 2010, ch. 4 and Coliva 2013. This is closely related to what Wittgenstein calls a world-picture (*OC* §§ 93-5 162-7, 233). Each world-picture may be historically and culturally relative (§ 256), so that our beliefs are groundless (§ 166), but they are nonetheless firmly fixed in us (§ 248). In certain contexts, what counts as certainty can also be turned into knowledge (§§ 4, 622). On world-picture, see Hamilton 2014, 129-49.

31   See also *PI* II xi, 221-2.

32   Hacker 1997, 66. See also Chauviré 2009, 167, and in parallel with this passage *OC* §§ 41 and 178.

4.2 Plato and Wittgenstein: Expert Knowledge vs Ordinary Knowledge

Thus according to Wittgenstein, a proposition that I cannot in any way conceive as false is not knowledge, but certainty. In Plato's view, on the contrary, knowledge can never be false in any way: knowledge is infallible, and what can be either true or false is opinion.[33] Yet, as I have argued, both rely on the grammar of knowledge. In my view, the difference can be explained by the following reason: Plato relies on the grammar of the 'knowledgeable' or 'wise' man, whereas Wittgenstein analyses the grammar of knowledge in a more trivial and ordinary sense ('to know that x', or 'to know something').[34] This clearly appears from the samples of correct use of the grammar of knowledge Wittgenstein gives: "I know where you touched my arm" (§ 41); "the story of Napoleon" (§ 163); "that water boils when it is put over a fire", "that I had breakfast this morning" and "that he is in pain" (§ 555). A proposition I can ground is something I can say I know.

Plato and the Greeks for their part mean by knowledge or wisdom (ἐπιστήμη and σοφία) something like the complete mastery of a domain, or at least a higher knowledge than that of ordinary men.[35] This is corroborated by Burnyeat's investigation on Greek verbs naming knowledge in Plato, according to which "of the three Greek verbs for knowing, ἐπίστασθαι is the one which is standardly used to claim or ascribe mastery of a body of knowledge" (Burnyeat 2011, 19).[36] Burnyeat does not take into account σοφία, but the above analyses confirm that it rather designates superior, expert or even perfect knowledge, not the mere fact of knowing one thing in particular.[37]

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33 This is precisely the reason why in Plato's view knowledge can only set over Forms, i.e. entities that always are what they are and never change. If we deny the existence of such realities, we are condemned to Gorgias' conclusion: for human beings, knowledge is unreachable and all we have is persuasion (*On Being and Non-Being*; *Defence of Palamedes* § 35).

34 The triviality of Wittgenstein's examples is explained by the controversy with Moore's self-evident propositions. But in *OC* § 651, he indicates that mathematics is not fundamentally different from the actions of the rest of our lives: what one could hold as expert knowledge is not in his eyes fundamentally different from ordinary knowledge.

35 See Schwab 2015, 5-7, drawing on a passage from Thucydides.

36 As argued by Burnyeat, such knowledge is not reducible to 'knowing-how' as opposed to 'knowing-that', for at least two reasons: firstly, the very distinction between these two categories is disputable; secondly, the knowledge referred to by the verb ἐπίστασθαι designates something different from 'knowing-how', namely the knowledge we have from teaching (Burnyeat 2011, 25). As a consequence the distinction between expert or perfect knowledge on the one hand, and ordinary knowledge on the other hand, cannot be equated with knowing-how and knowing-that. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this point.

37 Silva 2017, 33-124, demonstrates that although the variety of meanings of σοφία in pre-Platonic literature, it is always closely associated with authority and superiori-

**5   Conclusion: What Philosophical Use
        Should be Made of the Grammar of Knowledge?**

When elaborating his own philosophy, Plato pays close attention to ordinary language about (expert) knowledge, and in particular to the distinction between knowledge and opinion. It may well be that for Plato the figure of the expert knowledgeable man is not, or not always, appropriate to characterise the philosopher.[38] But this is at least a useful and efficient way to convince non-philosophers: if knowledge really must be infallible, in accordance with this language-game, then it can only deal with intelligible Forms that always remain identical to themselves. Genuine knowledge cannot therefore be directed towards empirical realities, and only philosophers can reach it.

Here appears a major discrepancy between Plato and Wittgenstein: in Plato the analysis of the grammar of knowledge is mainly a tool to convince non-philosophers, or to confirm results reached by other means, whereas in Wittgenstein grammatical investigations are the most part of the philosophical work. This is why in *Republic* 5 only the second argument with the sight-lovers is based on the grammar of knowledge, whereas the first one with Glaucon pays far less attention to language.[39] Moreover, the erotic ascent of the *Symposium* and the educational *cursus* of the philosophers in the *Republic* suggest that truth can only be reached through a turning of the whole soul towards the intelligible realm, and as the *Cratylus* claims, we cannot reach the truth through names, or even through the sole analysis of our ordinary ways of speaking. From this point of view, Plato is far from the ordinary language philosophy that developed after Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, he does not pay less attention to the grammar of knowledge than Wittgenstein.

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ty, and that the notion of expert knowledge is at the heart of Plato's σοφία. This is confirmed by the competitions for the title of σοφία in Greece (Lloyd 1987, 103).

38   See Dixsaut 2001, chs. 1-2. The most obvious case is Socrates' disavowal of knowledge as the highest form of wisdom (*Apology* 23a-b).

39   See also *Timaeus* 51c-e: the distinction between understanding (νοῦς) and true opinion, which recalls the *Republic* 5 argument, is only the shorter way to reach the truth about Forms.

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Λεκτόν and Use
Wittgenstein and the Incorporeal

Felice Cimatti
Università della Calabria, Italia

Abstract Any theory of language – ancient or contemporary, philosophical or cognitive – faces the same problem, i.e. how to reconcile the unequivocally corporeal character of the speakers and the world they speak of with the somewhat 'incorporeal' character of the meanings of linguistic expressions. It is for this reason, for example, that direct-reference theories of language seek to eliminate the Fregean notion of 'sense' (*Sinn*) from semantics. What is at stake is a completely corporeal account of language. However, such an attempt clashes with the fact that the vast majority of linguistic expressions do not refer either to any objects in the world or to the pre-scientific intuition that words have an autonomous 'meaning' (that is, that the 'sense' of a word does not coincide with the referent, *Bedeutung*). To solve such a problem, the Stoics introduced in their theory of language the notion of *lekton*, i.e. what is 'said' or is 'sayable'. Even if the *lekton* is, properly speaking, incorporeal, at the same time it is the corporeal product of what human speakers do when they utter a verbal utterance. In this paper I propose to compare the notion of *lekton* to the similar notion of 'use' (*Gebrauch*), much debated in Ludwig Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations. This paper does not theorise a direct philological connection between the Stoic notion of *lekton* and the notion of linguistic 'use' in Wittgenstein (even if this cannot be excluded either). Instead, the idea is that when one wants to propose an adequate theory of language, one cannot but introduce a notion such as that of *lekton* or 'use'.

Keywords Stoicism. Wittgenstein. Lekton. Meaning as use. Pragmatics.

Summary 1. The Place of 'Meaning' in a World of Corporeal Entities. – 2. The 'Meaning' of Meaning. – 3. From Semantics to Pragmatics. – 4. Conclusion: The Life of Signs.

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> You might say: The sense of a proposition is its pur-
> pose [Zweck]. (Or, of a word 'Its meaning is its pur-
> pose'.) But the natural history of the use [Gebrauch]
> of a word can't be any concern of logic.
> (Wittgenstein 1975, 59)

> You must bear in mind that the language-game is
> so to say something unpredictable. I mean: it is not
> based on grounds. It is not reasonable (or unreason-
> able).It is there – like our life.
> (Wittgenstein 1969, 73e)

1 The Place of 'Meaning' in a World of Corporeal Entities

"The Stoics say that voice is a body" (Aëtius, in Inwood, Gerson 2008,
92). Since voice is the medium of verbal language, this means that
language should be considered a kind of corporeal entity. Indeed,
the quote continues, "for everything which acts or has effects is a
body. And voice acts and has effects. For we hear it and perceive it
striking our ears and making an impression like a seal-ring on wax.
Again, everything which stimulates or disturbs is a body". However,
such a theory poses a major problem for every theory that aims to of-
fer a comprehensive and adequate description of language. Take the
case of what is called, in many and different traditions of thought, the
'meaning' of a linguistic expression: in which sense can the 'mean-
ing' be considered a 'body'? It is difficult to regard 'meaning' as a
corporeal entity, at least in the same sense in which the voice is un-
questionably corporeal, since it is the vibration of an air mass emit-
ted from our lungs ("an utterance is air that has been struck", Dio-
genes Laërtius, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 14). Therefore, since "neither
does anything incorporeal touch a body" (Nemesius, in Inwood, Ger-
son 2008, 98), how can the incorporeal 'meaning' affect the speak-
er of a language? It is in order to solve such a problem that the Sto-
ics developed the famous and controversial doctrine of incorporeals
(ἀσώματα, Bréhier 1907), namely: *lekta*, place (τόπος), void (κενός),
and time (χρόνος). In particular *lekta* have two important character-
istics: *lekta* are the "things said" and they are also "incorporeal" (Dio-
genes Laërtius, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 53). According to a famous
and much commented upon passage by Sextus Empiricus:

> there was yet another quarrel among the dogmatists; for some lo-
> cated the true and false in the thing signified, some located it in
> the utterance, and some in the motion of the intellect. And the Sto-
> ics championed the first view, saying that three things are linked
> with one another: the thing signified, the signifier, and the object.
> Of these, the signifier is the utterance, for example, 'Dion'. The
> thing signified is the thing indicated by the utterance and which

we grasp when it subsists in our intellect and which foreigners do not understand although they hear the utterance. The object is the external existent, for example, Dion himself. Two of these are bodies, the utterance and the object, and one incorporeal, the signified thing, i.e., the thing said [*lekton*] which is true or false. (Sextus Empiricus, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 89)

What is at stake is precisely the peculiar notion of *lekton*, what is said, or, more accurately – since *lekton* is derived from the Greek verb *legein* ('to say') – what is 'sayable'.[1] What does it mean that the *lekton* is an incorporeal (Grosz 2017)? The problem arises because we want to keep together these two apparently contradictory assertions: that 'voice is a body', on the one hand, and that *lekton* is an incorporeal, on the other. The problem is that while the voice of language is the result of a corporeal activity, the main linguistic entity, i.e. meaning, is not corporeal. How are we to keep together these two facets of language, the corporeal and the incorporeal?

Let us go back to the Sextus Empiricus quote. The Stoic semiotic model (Frede 1994; Manetti 2009) is a triangle whose three terms are: 'the thing signified, the signifier, and the object'. The last of these is the thing denoted by the sign. The signifier is the 'utterance' which actually denotes the thing. Both entities are corporeal. Between them there is the 'thing signified', that is, the 'thing said', i.e. *lekton*. This entity, on the contrary, is incorporeal. There is an obvious ontological tension between corporeal entities, on the one hand, and incorporeal ones, on the other. The Stoics' proposal looks for a way to overcome such a tension by transforming a seemingly irremovable 'mental' dimension of language into somewhat that can ultimately be traced back to a corporeal entity: the voice of the speakers' actual bodies. That is, even if *lekton* is not a fully ontological entity on its own, it somehow 'exists' in connection with the corporeal entities – the human speakers – that physically produce it. What is at issue is the whole situation concerning any effective act of speaking:

> they say that what subsists in accordance with a rational presentation is a thing said [*lekton*] and that a rational presentation is one according to which the content of a presentation can be made available to reason. (Sextus Empiricus, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 90)

A *lekton* 'exists' when someone utters an appropriate utterance in the appropriate context;[2] as a consequence, what is said 'can be made

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1 The most comprehensive account of this notion so far is Bronowski 2019.
2 Greaser 1978; Hülser 2012; de Harven 2018.

available to reason', that is, it can be understood by the participants in the linguistic act. Therefore, *lekta* are perfectly adequate participants in any linguistic act, even if they are not corporeal entities in themselves. As Ada Bronowsky correctly notes,

> the *lekta* are the Stoics' answer to the Platonic Forms. Though the Stoics reject the reality of the Forms, the Stoic analysis of the various roles and foundational contributions of the Forms to the framework of reality leads to the re-interpretation of that framework with the introduction of *lekta* into ontology. The introduction of *lekta* as ontological items leads the Stoics to tackle complexities, some of which are born out of the need to remedy or overcome the difficulties met by the presence of Platonic Forms. (Bronowski 2019, 8)

The notion of *lekton* highlights the need to admit the existence of 'meaning' in any theory of language seeking to account for all linguistic facts, that is, to admitting that there must exist something similar to a Platonic form – the meaning - if one wants to understand how language actually works. At the same time a *lekton* is not, properly speaking, a Platonic form, because the "substance is, according to the Stoics, body" (Diogenes Laërtius, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 56). The key point when it comes to the *lekton* is that it is not a simple articulate sound; what is necessary is for such a sound to be part of a complex linguistic situation, that is, that to be part of a unitary linguistic form of life:

> Utterance and speech differ in that utterance also includes echoes, whereas only what is articulate [counts as] speech. And speech differs from rational discourse in that rational discourse is always significant, and speech [can] also [be] meaningless—like the 'word' *'blituri'*—whereas rational discourse cannot be. There is a difference between saying and verbalising. For utterances are verbalised, whereas what is said are facts (which [is why they] are also 'things said' [*lekta*]). (Diogenes Laërtius in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 14)

Even if the verbal sound 'blituri' could perfectly well be a Greek word, it is not because it does not have any function in human language, that is, Greek speakers cannot carry out any rational action using such a sound, for

> what subsists in accordance with a rational presentation is a thing said [*lekton*] and [...] a rational presentation is one according to which the content of a presentation can be made available to reason. (Sextus Empiricus in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 90)

According to this interpretation, *lekta* are not mental or rational entities in themselves; rather, a *lekton* is 'rational' if it can be used in an effective linguistic situation:

> speech, according to the Stoics, is an utterance in letters, for example, 'day'. Rational discourse [*logos*] is an utterance that signifies, emitted from the intellect, <for example, 'It is day'>. (Diogenes Laërtius in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 14)

The utterance 'It is day' is a linguistic action that is rational because it can be effectively used in an actual linguistic exchange between human speakers. Rationality does not exist as a separate entity (there is no such a thing as the Platonic form, Logos); what is rational is the actual and meaningful use of language.

Therefore there is no such a thing as a *lekton* in itself, as an autonomous mental entity or as a simple 'meaning': for, as Austin once wrote, "'the meaning of a word' is, in general, if not always, a dangerous nonsense-phrase" (Austin 1961, 24). On the contrary, there are human beings who uses language in their life in order to act in the world with words and sentences. In this sense, *lekta* are inseparable from the actual use of language, just as the 'existence' of the void (which is another incorporeal) is indirectly attested by the fact that things can move 'into' empty space. The void is not a thing like a bottle or a spider, since "the void is what can be occupied by bodies but is not occupied" (Diogenes Laërtius in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 53). The corporeal existence of things implies the indirect existence of void; in a similar vein, the actual use of 'speech' indirectly implies that such a use is meaningful for human beings. For this reason "they say that a proposition is a complete *lekton* [thing said] which makes an assertion on its own" (Sextus Empiricus, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 27).

2 The 'Meaning' of Meaning

Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, wrote that "only the proposition has sense [*Sinn*]; only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning [*Bedeutung*]" (Wittgenstein 1922, § 3.3). A name in isolation has no meaning at all, that is, it does not refer to an object. A name has a meaning, that is, it can refer to an object, only when it is included in a meaningful proposition – i.e. one provided with a *Sinn*. This means that the basic unit of language is the proposition which, in turn, "is a picture of reality. The proposition is a model of the reality as we think it is" (§ 4.01). That the proposition is a 'model of the reality' means that the proposition is a hypothesis about the world, that is, a possible action in the world. It is not sufficient, for a proposition, to refer to an object in the world (Frege's *Bedeutung*) in order

for it to be meaningful, that is, to be endowed with *Sinn*. Only in this case can the proposition be part of some actual linguistic use. Since the proposition is a 'picture' of the world, in turn the proposition's sense consists in its 'meaningful' relation with the world: "what the picture represents is its sense" (§ 2.221). In other words, a proposition is meaningful when it can be applied to reality: "thus the picture is linked with reality; it reaches up to it" (§ 2.1511). The relationship between picture and reality is similar to that of a "a scale applied to reality" (§ 2.1512). For example, one measures a wooden board in order to make a table. For this reason, "the picture is a model of reality" (§ 2.12): for one needs to develop a model to prepare and plan a possible action on reality. As in the case of the *lekton*, the proposition is neither properly nor eminently a logical entity; moreover, it is the peculiar way human beings operate in the world: "colloquial language [*Umgangssprache*] is a part of the human organism and is not less complicated than it" (§ 4.002).

Wittgenstein proposes changing the usual philosophical attitude towards language. According to the traditional philosophical stance, one must look for the 'essence' of language, that is, what makes it what *it properly is*. Typically, the answers to such questions are something like: 'proposition', 'reference' or 'meaning'. However, the case of the *lekton* suggests a completely different explanatory strategy: instead of looking for the 'essence' of language, whatever this might be, one has to investigate what human beings do when they use language.[3] Obviously, such a strategy does not propose a new and dif-

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[3] Against this hypothesis, an anonymous referee has objected that in the *Tractatus* "linguistic picture has a meaning due to form, not to use". Logical form represents the essence of language; therefore, at least the 'first' Wittgenstein would not accept to consider meaning to be analogous to use. In order to support this criticism, the referee refers to a passage from Wittgenstein's conversations with Friedrich Waismann, where the philosopher seems to criticise the analogy that he had previously formulated in *Tractatus*: "§ 2.1514 The representing relation consists of the co-ordinations of the elements of the picture and the things. § 2.1515 These co-ordinations are as it were the feelers of its elements with which the picture touches reality". Wittgenstein, conversing with Waismann, stated: "Once I wrote, 'A proposition is laid against reality like a ruler. Only the end-points of the graduating lines actually *touch* the object that is to be measured.' I now prefer to say that a *system of propositions* is laid against reality like a ruler. What I mean by this is the following. If I lay a ruler against a spatial object, I lay *all the graduating lines* against it at the same time" (Waismann 1979, 63-4). However, Wittgenstein is criticising his own previous logical characterisation of propositions; in this new perspective, he consider that no proposition exists in isolation from all the other propositions of language – the '*system of propositions*'. This self-criticism does not represent a critique of the interpretation proposed by this paper, which attempts to trace back to the *Tractatus* the conception of meaning as use explicitly laid out in the *Philosophical Investigations*. More generally, there are two points to be made with respect to this referee's observation: first, the essay's suggestion to interpret the *lekton* as use is not diminished by it, since the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations* explicitly supports it. Secondly, and more importantly, when one reads the *Tractatus* through the lenses of the *Philosophical Investigations*, one can find several pas-

ferent 'essence' for language, quite the contrary: it makes apparent that the whole attempt to find such an 'essence' is useless. The focus now is on the role of language in human life, while the classical philosophical strategy frequently loses sight of its actual use. From this point of view, the shift from the 'meaning' as a mental entity to the *lekton* as a linguistic activity implies a completely different way of understanding language:

> This finds expression in the question of the *essence* of language, of propositions, of thought. – For although we, in our investigations, are trying to understand the nature of language – its function, its structure – yet *this* is not what that question has in view. For it sees the essence of things not as something that already lies open to view, and that becomes *surveyable* through a process of ordering, but as something that lies *beneath* the surface. Something that lies within, which we perceive when we see *right into* the thing, and which an analysis is supposed to unearth.
>   '*The essence is hidden from us*': this is the form our problem now assumes. We ask: '*What* is language?', '*What* is a proposition?' And the answer to these questions is to be given once for all, and independently of any future experience. (Wittgenstein 2009, § 92)

Now the problem is not to look for what is '*beneath* the surface' of language, that is, beneath what human beings do with language in their actual lives; quite the contrary, the problem is to describe the complex human activities which are inextricably intertwined with language use. In particular, what do human beings do with language? The concept of 'language-*game*', which "is used here to emphasise the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life" (§ 23), is introduced by Wittgenstein to mark the shift

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sages that – at least to some degree – confirm this paper' thesis. Take the case of the famous note in the *Notebooks*: "in the proposition a world is as it were put together experimentally. (As when in the law-court in Paris a motor-car accident is represented by means of dolls, etc." (Wittgenstein 1961, 7). What is an experiment if not a kind of action? An action where the proposition has the function of envisaging a situation, that is, a possible arrangement of objects. Wittgenstein's example is very clear: to each proposition there corresponds a different manipulation of the objects of the situation. For this reason, Wittgenstein wrote that "the way in which language signifies is mirrored in its use" (82), already explicitly linking meaning and use at the time of the *Tractatus*. Indeed, in the *Tractatus* he wrote: "§ 3.326 In order to recognise the symbol in the sign we must consider the significant use". The sign is the mere signifier, while the symbol is the sign in action. At the same time, a sign is "meaningless" when it "is not necessary" (§ 3.328), that is, when there is no use for it. As for what he says to Waismann, in *Philosophical Remarks* Wittgenstein wrote: "what does it mean, to understand a proposition as a member of a system of propositions? Its complexity is only to be explained by the use for which it is intended" (Wittgenstein 1975, 10). Also in this case what is at stake is the use of a proposition.

from the first kind of philosophical work – that based on the search for essences – to this different approach, which is no longer interested in essences. Now the focus is on the linguistic activities:

> it is interesting to compare the diversity of the tools of language and of the ways they are used, the diversity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (§ 23)

Once what is at stake is this "diversity of the tools of language", the ancient (Platonic) question about the essence of language acquires a completely different form. In *The Blue Book* Wittgenstein writes:

> What is the meaning of a word?
> Let us attack this question by asking, first, what is an explanation of the meaning of a word; what does the explanation of a word look like?
> The way this question helps us is analogous to the way the question 'how do we measure a length?' helps us to understand the problem 'what is length?'. The questions 'What is length?', 'What is meaning?', 'What is the number one?' etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can't point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it).
> Asking first 'What's an explanation of meaning?' has two advantages. You in a sense bring the question 'what is meaning?' down to earth. For, surely, to understand the meaning of 'meaning' you ought also to understand the meaning of 'explanation of meaning'. Roughly: 'let's ask what the explanation of meaning is, for whatever that explains will be the meaning.' Studying the grammar of the expression 'explanation of meaning' will teach you something about the grammar of the word 'meaning' and will cure you of the temptation to look about you for some object which you might call 'the meaning'. (Wittgenstein 1958, 1)

If one wants to define what *the* 'meaning' of a word is, one should first ask oneself what could be an acceptable explanation of such a word. Indeed, in order to explain the so-called 'literal' meaning of the word 'word', for example, one has to use other words. 'Meaning' is a normal linguistic entity which exists on the very same logical level as any other linguistic entity:

> One might think: if philosophy speaks of the use of the word 'philosophy', there must be a second-order philosophy. But that's not the way it is; it is, rather, like the case of orthography, which deals

with the word 'orthography' among others without then being sec-
ond-order. (Wittgenstein 2009, 54ᵉ)

This means that even if one could find the supposed literal 'mean-
ing' of a word, such a 'meaning' would not stop being a normal word
like any other word in the language. This is a point that Wittgenstein
made again and again. In the *Tractatus* he wrote: "All propositions
are of equal value" (Wittgenstein 1922, § 6.4) – that is, human beings
cannot part from language and move to an alogical and transcend-
ent level of 'meaning' beyond the level of language use. Therefore,
the English word 'meaning' is a word exactly like 'socks' or 'potato
peeler'. In a similar vein, if one wants to establish what 'length' is,
one must pay attention to how human beings measure lengths and
why they do so.

The 'meaning' of 'length' cannot be ascertained without placing
the explanation into the 'form of life' where such an activity actual-
ly takes place. As Wittgenstein explicitly notes, what is at stake is
"bring[ing] the question 'what is meaning?' down to earth". Take the
case of ostensive definition in the language-game in which you must
'explain' the use of a word by indicating the object to which it refers.
Even in this seemingly simple case, ostension is not sufficient to un-
derstand the meaning of a word:

> The definition of the number two, 'That is called 'two'' – pointing
> to two nuts – is perfectly exact. – But how can the number two be
> defined like that? The person one gives the definition to doesn't
> know *what* it is that one wants to call 'two'; he will suppose that
> 'two' is the name given to *this* group of nuts! – He *may* suppose
> this; but perhaps he does not. He might make the opposite mis-
> take: when I want to assign a name to this group of nuts, he might
> take it to be the name of a number. And he might equally well take
> a person's name, which I explain ostensively, as that of a colour,
> of a race, or even of a point of the compass. That is to say, an os-
> tensive definition can be variously interpreted in *any* case. (Witt-
> genstein 2009, 17ᵉ)

If not even a direct ostension of the reference allows us to under-
stand what is the 'meaning' of a word, how can such a 'meaning' be
understood?

> So, one could say: an ostensive definition explains the use [*Ge-
> brauch*] – the meaning of a word – if the role the word is supposed
> to play in the language is already clear. So if I know that some-
> one means to explain a colour-word to me, the ostensive explana-
> tion 'That is called 'sepia'' will enable me to understand the word.
> (Wittgenstein 2009, 18ᵉ)

Wittgenstein clarifies that the 'meaning' of a word is nothing but the 'use' of such a word in the context of human life. As he famously writes,for a large class of cases of the employment of the word 'meaning' – though not for *all* [the metalinguistic use of the word 'use' is a case that does not fall under this definition] – this word can be explained in this way: the meaning of a word is its use [*Gebrauch*] in the language". (Wittgenstein 2009, 25ᵉ)

The notion of 'use' allows us to develop a theory of language that no longer requires us to assume the existence of the Platonic notion of 'meaning'. Language falls completely within the world of corporeal entities, as the Stoics' philosophy suggests. At the same time, the notion of 'use', like that of *lekton*, allows us to keep on taking into account the idea that the 'meaning' of a linguistic expression is somehow an incorporeal entity. The basic metaphysical assumption according to which in the world there are only corporeal entities is maintained; however, such an assumption does not require us to abandon the fundamental notion of 'meaning'.

3 From Semantics to Pragmatics

What is properly the function of incorporeals? As we have already seen, incorporeals are not things in themselves, but they allow us to place corporeal things in a rational space, that is, they allow us to perceive, think and speak of them. In order for us to be able to talk about something, it must at least to occupy a place in the void of space and time. That is, it must be identified as this or that precise thing. From this point of view, all incorporeals have to do with language, so in a sense all of them are *lekta*:

> *lekta* are, after all, quite like void, place, and time: they can be listed among the incorporeal although 'objective' conditions, without which the interaction of bodies in the world would neither be analysable nor fully intelligible. (Brunschwig 2003, 219)

One can find a somewhat similar position in the *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein writes that

> just as we cannot think of spatial objects at all apart from space, or temporal objects apart from time, so we cannot think of any object apart from the possibility of its connexion with other things. (Wittgenstein 1922, § 2.0121)

This means that the prior existence of objects is a condition for language to exist. For this reason, Wittgenstein continues, "the object

is simple" (§ 2.02), because *object* is not an empirical fact, quite the contrary: objects have to exist in order to allow language to exist, for otherwise there would be nothing determinate that language could say about the world. That the object is 'simple' (even if it may be empirically complex) means that simplicity is a prerequisite for any meaningful language use: "the demand for simple things *is* the demand for definiteness of sense" (Wittgenstein 1961, 63ᵉ). In the same vein, we need objects to exist in order to act in the world. One could not act in a determinate way in the world if one does not presuppose that the world is made up of distinct objects:

> to anyone that sees clearly, it is obvious that a proposition like 'This watch is lying on the table' contains a lot of indefiniteness, in spite of its form's being completely clear and simple in outward appearance. So we *see* that this simplicity is only constructed. (Wittgenstein 1961, 69ᵉ)

Once we understand that the simplicity of the object is not an empirical character of real objects, but rather the result of our action – practical and mental - in the world, then semantics transforms itself into pragmatics. What is at stake is not the dualistic relationship between propositions on one side and things on the other side: what matters is what human beings *do* with language. In this pragmatic perspective, the dualism between language and world collapses on itself.

The logical function of the *object* for Wittgenstein is analogous to that of the *lekton* for the Stoics; in drawing such an analogy, one might say that the proposition is a peculiar kind of action:

> in the proposition we–so to speak–arrange things *experimentally*, as they do not have to be in reality; but we cannot make any *unlogical* arrangement, for in order to do what we should have to be able to get outside logic in language. (Wittgenstein 1961, 13ᵉ)

An '*unlogical* arrangement' would be a situation in which the object is not individuated through the incorporeals. Any proposition is a kind of experiment, that is, it is a possible action in the world that sometimes succeeds and sometimes does not. For this reason "the proposition constructs a world" (Wittgenstein 1961, 16ᵉ), that is, it does not simply describe the world, but constructs it. To be more precise, the proposition constructs the world where language – in a circular way – can grasp the objects that it labels. Language does not properly represent the world, as if language and the world were separate from each other; more precisely, language is the human way to create possible linguistic situations. This means that language and the world are tightly connected, and that the human world is made of *lekta* as language-mediated-objects. For this reason, "at any rate [...] we quite

instinctively designate [...] objects by means of names" (Wittgenstein 1961, 48ᵉ) – that is, just as a beaver builds a dam with its teeth and paws, so a human animal constructs her world through propositions.

The *lekton* is a 'thing said', that is, the verbal activity that mediates between the proposition and the object to whom it refers:

> Aristotle teaches what is primarily and immediately signified by utterances, saying that it is thoughts and that through these as intermediaries, objects are signified. And we need think of nothing beyond these which is between the thought and the object. But the Stoics hypothesised that such a thing exists and thought it should be called a 'thing said'. (Ammonius, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 90)

According to a direct-reference semantics (Stroll 1999) there is nothing in between propositions and objects; however, such a theory does not explain why human beings should speak of the world simply to match propositions and objects. That is, such a theory deprives language of any function in actual human life. On the contrary, the notion of *lekton* – understood as verbally mediated action – brings disembodied semantics back to earth, since language is the human way of acting in the world:

> think of the tools in a toolbox: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screwdriver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. (And in both cases there are similarities). (Wittgenstein 2009, 9ᵉ)

Take the case of the hammer. First of all, it is a corporeal entity. However, the function of this object in the human world is not contained in the object itself. A hammer can function as an object to drive nails in only for those animals naturally endowed with hands. This means that the utilitarian character of the hammer, its *function*, is an incorporeal character that can only be actualised when the hammer is grasped by the fingers of a hand. The *use* of the hammer is incorporeal, yet it materially depends on the corporeal characteristics of the hammer and of the hands that grasp it. Another consequence of the shift from a disembodied semantics to an embodied and situated pragmatics is that while in the former case one can imagine a situation where someone learns how to use a language, in the latter such a situation cannot exist. Indeed, in the former case language and the world are originally separate from each other: this means that in principle a person who is learning how to use a language is already capable of thinking in an articulate way without the mediation of language. In the latter case, on the contrary, language is not simply another capacity which is added to the human mind like any other cognitive capacity: for in this case language and mind are seen

as having developed together. According to this perspective, a human mind that is independent of language does not properly exist:

> But this means that any kind of explanation of a language presupposes a language already. And in a certain sense, the use of language is something that cannot be taught, i.e. I cannot use language to teach it in the way in which language could be used to teach someone to play the piano.–And that of course is just another way of saying: I cannot use language to get outside language. (Wittgenstein 1975, 54)

This is the key difference between a semantic model of language and a pragmatic one. In the former case it is possible to imagine that a human being could be cognitively separated from language. In the latter case, on the contrary, such a possibility does not exist, since to be human means to be able to speak and think through a language. Significantly, the Stoic position is similar to this one:

> 'You say,' he says, 'that every animal first has an affinity to its own constitution; but a human being's constitution is rational and so a human being has an affinity not to his animality but to his rationality; for a human being is dear to himself in virtue of that part which makes him human'. (Seneca, in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 191)

Wittgenstein has always held a similar position, arguing that it is impossible for a human being to place herself outside language and logic (Seneca's 'rationality'). For example, already in the *Tractatus* he wrote that "to be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world" (Wittgenstein 1922, § 4.12). Since one needs logic in order to 'represent the logical form' of a proposition, it is apparent that if one places oneself outside logic, one cannot have the logical form of any proposition represented. This means that language is not a capacity that a human being can do without, at least if she does not wish to lose what makes her properly human. The anthropological shift from the dualistic model of semantics – where language and the world are separate from one another – to the pragmatic one implies that language and the world are now two facets of a unitary biological entity, the human form of life.

Take the case of the linguistic game of ostension, where someone points to an object and labels it. What Wittgenstein points out is that, in order to understand such a peculiar use of language, it is not sufficient to see the object and hear the associated linguistic label: first of all, one has to realise why one should name an object – that is, what the aim of this peculiar action is. Such an aim is not found either in the object named or in the corresponding linguistic label. This *use*

is an 'incorporeal'. In the human form of life actions on objects are mediated by language. For this reason, as Wittgenstein notes in *Philosophical Remarks*,

> what characterises propositions of the form 'This is...' is only the fact that the reality outside the so-called system of signs somehow enters into the symbol. (Wittgenstein 1975, 120)

The symbol can only stick to the object because such an object is already a linguistic entity, that is, an object whose individuation *qua* object already implies the linguistic label. It is precisely this circularity that marks the passage from semantics to pragmatics. While in the former case there is no intermediate entity between the proposition and the named object, in the latter what keeps them together is the notion of meaning as use. The fact that the use is an incorporeal means that it consists in the functioning of linguistic expressions in human life. This use is not a dualistic mental entity (therefore, it is not a Platonic entity); however, it is necessary in order to make language-games meaningful – that is, endowed with an anthropological sense. 'Use' transforms a bare logical and disembodied symbolic formula into "a *move* in the language-game" (Wittgenstein 2009, 14ᵉ). That is, it transforms logical semantics into living pragmatics:

> Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? – In use [*Gebrauch*] it *lives.* Is it there that it has living breath within it? – Or is the *use* its breath? (Wittgenstein 2009, 135ᵉ)

4 Conclusion: The Life of Signs

What does it properly mean that 'use' is the 'breath' or 'life' of symbols? First of all, it means that linguistic symbols are no symbols at all in the absence of such a use, that is, they are not actual moves in the human language-game. Language needs a breath of life to become alive, and such a breath is use. Perhaps this is only an impression but it comes quite naturally to assimilate the notion of 'use' to the Stoic one of *pneuma*, "a kind of matter proper to the soul": as such, *pneuma* is not a special transcendent essence, but "a qualified blend of airy and fiery substance" (Galen in Inwood, Gerson 2008, 99). *Pneuma* is to the living body what use is to the symbol. It is the actual 'life' of living bodies. In a similar vein, linguistic use is what brings life to logical symbols, which would otherwise be dead:

> The mistake we are liable to make could be expressed thus: We are looking for the use of a sign, but we look for it as though it were an object *co-existing* with the sign. (One of the reasons for

this mistake is again that we are looking for a 'thing corresponding to a substantive.')

The sign (the sentence) gets its significance from the system of signs, from the language to which it belongs. Roughly: understanding a sentence means understanding a language.

As a part of the system of language, one may say, the sentence has life. But one is tempted to imagine that which gives the sentence life as something in an occult sphere, accompanying the sentence. But whatever accompanied it would for us just be another sign. (Wittgenstein 1958, 5)

We keep on searching for something "hidden in an occult sphere" (typically a mental meaning) that "gives the sentence life". Indeed, what makes language alive is nothing but the actual use of language in the human form of life:

it is misleading then to talk of thinking as of a 'mental activity'. We may say that thinking is essentially the activity of operating with signs. This activity is performed by the hand, when we think by writing; by the mouth and larynx, when we think by speaking; and if we think by imagining signs or pictures, I can give you no agent that thinks. (Wittgenstein 1958, 6)

Take the case of the mouth and larynx: they are corporeal entities whose social and regular functioning produces a meaningful proposition, that is, an incorporeal meaning:

if we had to name anything which is the life of the sign, we should have to say that it was its *use*. (Wittgenstein 1958, 4)

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Aristotle and Inner Awareness

Manuel García Carpintero
Universitat de Barcelona, Espanya

Abstract   Recent debates on phenomenal consciousness have focused on the idea that conscious experience includes an experience of the self, whatever else it may present the self with. When a subject has an experience as of a pink cube, she is not just aware of the world as being presented in a certain way (a pinkish, cubic way in this case); she is also aware of the fact that it is presented to her. According to Victor Caston, Aristotle defended an interesting version of this view in *De Anima*, later developed in different directions by many other philosophers – outside current research in the Analytic tradition, particularly in Phenomenology and the Heidelberg school. My goal in this paper is to locate Aristotle's views, as interpreted by Caston, in the context of the current debate, and to offer some considerations in favour of a view like Aristotle's, also following Caston.

Keywords   Phenomenal consciousness. Self-experience. Subjective character. Self-knowledge.

Summary   1 Introduction. – 2 The Subjective Character of Phenomenal Consciousness. – 3 Views about Subjective Character. – 4 Some Considerations for Robust Views of Subjective Character.

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1   Introduction

Recent debates on phenomenal consciousness have focused on the idea that conscious experience includes an experience of the self, whatever else it may present the self with. When a subject has an experience as of a pink cube, she is not just aware of the world as being presented in a certain way (a pinkish, cubic way in this case); she is also aware of the fact that it is presented to *her*. According to Victor Caston, Aristotle defended an interesting version of this view in *De Anima*, later developed in different directions by many other philosophers – outside current research in the Analytic tradition, particularly in Phenomenology and the Heidelberg school. My goal in this paper is to locate Aristotle's views, as interpreted by Caston, in the context of the current debate, and to offer some considerations in favour of a view like Aristotle's, also following Caston. In the first section I'll introduce the topic, in the second I introduce the most common current views on it, in a scale going from the more deflationary to the more robust, locating Aristotle's view as interpreted by Caston at the committal end. In the third I offer some considerations in support of it, distinguishing two varieties.

2   The Subjective Character of Phenomenal Consciousness

Some topics addressed in philosophy are, we might assume, 'natural kinds' endowed with relatively hidden, to that extent objective 'real essences', worth theorising about.[1] Phenomenal consciousness and the features of conscious experiences we are aware of when in a phenomenally conscious state, *qualia*, are a good case in point.[2] It is often a crucial part of whatever illumination philosophy can provide in addressing its topics to agree on a minimal characterisation, making sure we are all on the same page in engaging them.[3] Such a charac-

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[1] Here I don't use 'natural' in opposition to 'social', but rather to refer to properties and kinds in Lewis' (1983) 'sparse' (as opposed to 'abundant') sense. Natural kinds in this sense might well be 'social constructs', definable by social rules. 'Natural' properties and kinds are those that play substantive explanatory roles, and hence have a 'hidden nature' which only reveals itself after theorising. This might just be philosophical, armchair-like; but it should be unifiable with empirical theorising along standard lines.

[2] Cf. Shea 2012 for elaboration and justification. Caston 2002, 759 argues that Aristotle was discussing phenomenal consciousness.

[3] Cf. the illuminating discussion Taylor 2018, §§ 2-4 provides as a prelude to his minimal characterisation of another traditional philosophical topic, indeterminacy.

terisation should only use uncontroversial notions, and it should be neutral among the different accounts of the topic that can be provided – including the sceptical view that rejects the just stated ontological assumption, contending instead that the phenomenon is a 'grue-like' one, lacking any objective explanatory nature.

A possible strategy for the consciousness case is suggested by Hill's "meta-problem of consciousness" proposal (Hill 2009, 19-22; cf. Kriegel 2015, 52-3, Chalmers 2018): phenomenally conscious states are conditions such as pains, orgasms, colours or tastes, which *it is reasonable to think of* as properly graspable only from the perspective of the conscious subject, so that *prima facie* compelling arguments like Kripke's (1980) 'no conceivability error' or Jackson's (1986) 'Mary's acquired knowledge' have been advanced to argue for their irreducibility to the physical. A more traditional strategy in contemporary analytic philosophy uses Nagel's (1974) 'what it is like' characterisation: *qualia* are features of experiences such that *there is something it is like* for a subject in virtue of having them. Snowdon (2010) has examples indicating that the phrase can be used without connotations suggestive of phenomenal states and their features, which is in part what motivates the alternative meta-problem characterisation. Stoljar (2016) provides a detailed semantic analysis, arguing that Nagel's phrase has, at least pragmatically, the required intimations:

> 'what it is like'-sentences express relations of a certain kind – I call them *affective* relations – that hold between individuals and events; to a first approximation, an affective relation holds between an individual and an event just in case the individual is affected in a particular kind of way by the event. In many contexts, but not in all, the affective relations expressed by 'what it is like'-sentences will be of a certain special kind I call *experiential* relations [...] an experiential relation holds between an individual and an event just in case the individual feels a certain way in virtue of the event. (Stoljar 2016, 1162)

As Stoljar points out, Nagel's characterisation has suggested to many "a reflexive or self-representational theory, according to which an individual is in a conscious state if the individual represents or is aware of (in some sense) their being in that state" (2016, 1162); he quotes a crisp statement of the suggestion by Levine (2007, 514):

> the very phrase that serves to canonically express the notion of the phenomenal – 'what it's like for x to ...' – explicitly refers to the phenomenal state in question being 'for' the subject. The way I would put it [...] is: Phenomenal states/properties are not merely instantiated in the subject, but are experienced by the subject.

Experience is more than mere instantiation, and part of what that 'more' involves is some kind of access.[4]

Similarly, in a classical paper trying to isolate the phenomenal character of conscious states, Block (1995, 235) suggests that phenomenal states "often seem to have a 'me-ishness' about them, the phenomenal state often represents the state as 'a state of me'".[5] Stoljar, however, persuasively shows that, on his quoted analysis, no reflexivity is entailed by Nagel's minimal characterisation: it just follows from S being in a phenomenally conscious state that S *feels some way* by being in it, which *prima facie* doesn't require that S *represents* or be *aware* of the state, or of herself being in that state.[6] The question, as he grants, is whether there are good reasons to think that this 'feeling some way' common to phenomenal states is such that the individuals in them are 'in some sense' aware of their being in them – and what that sense is. Debates whether this is so, and how it should be understood if so, have proliferated in the past decade in the analytic tradition. As Caston (2002) persuasively shows, they have a long pedigree, going back to Aristotle.[7]

Conscious states have distinctive features, distinguishable in them or across them, those 'ways' their subjects 'feel' by being in them. These are *qualia* in the primary sense if this notion, and their study has occupied philosophers for the past decades. Beyond such *determinates*, the current issue concerns a *determinable* common to all paradigmatic phenomenally conscious states. This would thereby have claims to be considered the essence of consciousness, or a crucial feature thereof (Zahavi, Kriegel 2016, 50); to that extent, our topic overlaps with the main target of philosophical theories of consciousness (Smith 2020, § 3; Siewert 2021, § 7). Gallagher and Zahavi (2021, § 1) put it thus:

> There is something it is like to taste chocolate, and this is different from what it is like to remember what it is like to taste chocolate, or to smell vanilla, to run, to stand still, to feel envious, nervous, depressed or happy, or to entertain an abstract belief. All of these different experiences are, however, also characterised by their distinct first-personal character. The what-it-is-likeness of phenomenal episodes is properly speaking a what-it-is-like-*for-me*-ness. This

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[4]   But cf. Levine 2019 for his more nuanced recent position, which grants, I think, Stoljar's objection.

[5]   Cf. also Rosenthal 1986, 344-5.

[6]   Cf. Stoljar 2021, § 6 for a summary of his objection to the alleged reflexive implications of Nagel's phrase. Cf. also Byrne 2004, 214-16; Siewert 2013, 238-41; Guillot 2017, 35.

[7]   Cf. Frank 2004 and Zahavi 2005 for other strands in the history of the notion.

for-me-ness doesn't refer to a specific experiential quality like sour or soft, rather it refers to the distinct first-personal givenness of experience. It refers to the fact that the experiences I am living through are given differently (but not necessarily better) to me than to anybody else.[8]

In their introduction to a recent journal issue on our topic, Farrell and McClelland put thus the intended contrast:

> When we perceptually experience the sunset we have an outer awareness of the scene before us but we also have an inner awareness of that very experience, or of something associated with it. (Farrell, McClelland 2017, 2)[9]

Many different terms have been used to capture the notion, from Block's 'me-ishness' and Kriegel's 'inner awareness' to Gallagher and Zahavi's 'for-me-ness' and 'mineness'.[10] Borrowing from the phenomenological school (which, as he shows, intensively discussed the topic), Zahavi (2005) used the descriptively accurate 'pre-reflective self-awareness'. Here I'll mostly use Levine's (2001, 6-7) also evocative but less unwieldy terminology, contrasting 'qualitative character' and '*qualia*' with 'subjective character' and 'subjectivity'.

3 Views about Subjective Character

We should distinguish *subjective character* from *introspection*, by which I will understand a conscious judgment about features of one's mental life. Let us consider a perceptual state, visually experiencing a pink cube in front of one. We could introspect the perceptual state and its features, its perceptual mode (thus discriminating it from, say, a visual imagining with the same content), the pinkishness in it, whether the length of the cube edges appears to be smaller than the distance at which the cube appears to be, and so on. This introspective attitude would be a further conscious state. The subjective character of the perceptual state is supposed to be a feature that it has, whether or not it becomes the target of introspective reflection. It is also a feature that, by being conscious, the introspective state itself has, even if it itself is not the target of a further, second-order introspection.

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[8] Cf. the feature of conscious experience that Merlo 2021, following James, calls 'feltness', and the ontological problem of other minds he develops on its basis.

[9] They borrow the term 'inner awareness' from Kriegel 2009; Boner et al. 2019.

[10] This is just a small sample; cf. Byrne 2004, § 3; Guillot 2017, 25.

On a deflationary view, subjectivity is a feature of phenomenal experiences that, by itself, doesn't make a distinctive additional contribution to phenomenal character, to what it is like for its subject to have that conscious experience:

> The for-me-ness of experience still admits of two crucially different interpretations. According to a deflationary interpretation, it consists simply in the experience *occurring* in someone (a 'me'). On this view, for-me-ness is a non-experiential aspect of mental life – a merely metaphysical fact, so to speak, not a phenomenological fact. The idea is that we ought to resist a no-ownership view according to which experiences can occur as free-floating unowned entities. Just as horse-riding presupposes the existence of a horse, experiencing presupposes a subject of experience. In contrast, a non-deflationary interpretation construes for-me-ness as an experiential aspect of mental life, a bona fide *phenomenal* dimension of consciousness. On this view, to say that an experience is *for me* is precisely to say something more than that it is *in me*. (Zahavi, Kriegel 2016, 36)

Minimally understood, thus, subjective character consists in the ontological fact that phenomenally conscious experiences are not 'free-floating' eventualities like raining or lightning but require a subject – which does appear to be implied by Nagel's characterisation –, plus the epistemological fact that they are available for introspection. Robustly understood however, as Howell and Thompson (2017, 106) put it, subjective character should make some contribution to the overall phenomenal character of a conscious state, and it should in some way present the subject of that state.[11] One might be sceptical about this robust view, sticking to the deflationary take by claiming that it is only through introspection that we gain a conscious awareness of ourselves:[12]

> Being possessed of the first-person conceptual capacity always, or at least for the most part, puts one in a *position* to know immediately about one's own conscious mental life as one's own. This 'privileged' position is exploited if and when the capacity for reflec-

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11 Or just the state itself – see below.

12 Stoljar 2021 offers a thorough examination of extant arguments for robust accounts of subjectivity and questions them all, in support of a minimalism like the one that Shear and Howell, Thompson advance in the quotes that follow. Stoljar 2018 has a good account of the relation between phenomenal states and introspection consistent with sceptical views. See Siewert 2013, 250 and Giustina 2022 for some responses to his arguments in support of more robust views, and see § 4 below for my own critical take on Stoljar's points.

tive self-consciousness is exercised. But it does not follow from the ever present *availability* of taking up a distinctively first-personal relation to one's own conscious experience that there is an *actual* consciousness of oneself that, *experientially*, always accompanies one's conscious experience of the world. (Schear 2009, 98)

Despite the fact that experiences on the unreflective level don't have mineness, we can gain a sense of mineness in reflection... In reflection we lay claim to our experiences, and the mineness is a product – not a condition of – that attitude. (Howell, Thompson 2017, 120)[13]

Hume's famous incapacity to find himself in experience provides a phenomenological motivation for the deflationary position. Here is an often-quoted passage to that effect from Sartre, reminiscent of Moore's also often quoted passage on the transparency of experience:

When I run after a streetcar, when I look at the time, when I am absorbed in contemplating a portrait, there is no *I*. There is consciousness of the streetcar-having-to-be-overtaken, etc. I am then plunged into the world of objects [...] but *me*, I have disappeared [...] There is no place for me on this level. And this is not a matter of chance, due to a momentary lapse of attention, but happens because of the very structure of consciousness. (Sartre 1957, 48-9)

The moment we try to fix our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue: the other element is as if it were diaphanous. (Moore 1903, 450)

It is worth noticing that neither Moore nor Sartre embraced the sceptical position that the texts suggest. Moore assumes in the quoted passage that 'the other element' is there nonetheless, appearances notwithstanding, and Sartre takes pre-reflective self-consciousness to be an essential ingredient of the 'structure of consciousness'. But some theorists of consciousness rely on the intuitive impressions that Sartre and Moore helpfully describe. 'First-order' representational theories along the lines of those developed by Dretske or Tye are influential views that stress those intuitions. These views accept a notion that has become recently somehow controversial, for which Block (2015) offers compelling considerations; namely, that there are unconscious states with representational features, perhaps the very

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13 Cf. however Howell 2019 for a slightly less deflationary view.

same had by conscious states.[14] What makes the difference? Similarly, and as Gallagher and Zahavi suggest in the quotation in § 2, what distinguishes for me my own phenomenal experiences from those I ascribe to others, perhaps in the same mood and with the same content? Consistent with the deflationary view of consciousness just outlined, first-order theorists invoke in response dispositional or functional features; thus, for instance, Tye (2002, 62) speaks of phenomenally conscious states being "poised", standing "ready and available to make a direct impact on beliefs and/or desires".

Other philosophers have argued for more robust views of subjectivity that posit occurrent phenomenal features.[15] As already suggested, a main reason in favour of them is that, unlike their deflationary counterparts, robust views afford an evidential grounding for introspective judgments targeting conscious states. I'll consider first representationalist views. Perhaps the best known are the 'higher-order' theories developed by Armstrong, Carruthers, Lycan or Rosenthal, on which the conscious character of a state is fixed by a concurrent higher-order awareness of it, a perception or a further thought – to prevent a regress, ultimately unconscious. According to Caston's interpretation (2002, 773-5), Aristotle seriously considered this higher-order state view, and rejected it mostly on account of a regress argument. Aristotle apparently didn't confront the manoeuvre of allowing that the conscious-making higher-order state be non-conscious; however, as Caston (2002, 779-81) points out, these contemporary higher-order accounts still face very serious objections.[16] On Kriegel's (2009) alternative view, subjectivity consists in the fact that phenomenally conscious states *peripherally* represent themselves, in addition to whatever other representational features they may have.[17] These views are very close to Aristotle's the way Caston (2002) interpret it; on that view, the representational state accounting for subjectivity is a different *type* of state than its target, but, unlike in higher-order theories, they are one and the same *token*. Zahavi (2018, 706-8) presents his view along similar lines. On his account, conscious states primarily present themselves, and also thereby the subject bearing that conscious state.

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14 Cf. also Quilty-Dunn 2018.

15 The dispositions posited by deflationary accounts are of course themselves occurrent properties, but the explanatory features in them (the introspecting) are merely iffy.

16 Siewert 2013; Stoljar 2017 and Williford 2019 discuss whether contemporary higher-order views really avoid a regress. Weisberg 2019 offers a recent defence of the Higher-Thought account of subjectivity, confronting objections like Caston's.

17 O'Conaill 2019 defends a related view, on which the relevant self-representational feature of conscious states is claimed to be a generic kind of *mode*, like the mode distinguishing conscious visual perceptual states from conscious visual imaginings, but with a more general character.

On all these representationalist robust views on subjectivity, subjects are the entities to whom these self-representings or self-manifestings of conscious states occur, but they are not what is primarily represented or manifested; these are instead the states themselves. These views are compatible with *phenomenism*, which some of those philosophers also endorse – the view that conscious states have essential intrinsic features beyond their representational ones, which don't supervene on them. Such 'mental paint' (Block 2003) affords an alternative, non-representationalist account of subjectivity, in terms of real (as opposed to merely intentional) relations of *familiarity* or *acquaintance* between the subject and those features (Duncan 2021). In Schear's (2009, 96) happy turn of phrase, subjective character turns out to be on those views "a kind of implicit acquaintance with oneself, or background self-familiarity". This is Williford's (2015) view; subjectivity, the self-presentation of the conscious state is not an intentional relation but a real one, an acquaintance relation. Duncan (2018; 2019) argues for a more committal acquaintance view on which we are not just acquainted with our conscious states, but also with ourselves, and also with our bearing or ownership relation to them. All these views then allow that the features of first-order phenomenally conscious states with which their subjects are acquainted by being in them, or which the states self-represent, come to constitute the contents of conscious introspective second-order states targeting them (Chalmers 2010; Gertler 2012).

4 Some Considerations for Robust Views of Subjective Character

Contemporary work supportive of deflationism such as Stoljar's (2018; 2021) is truly sophisticated; it deploys a good portion of the full theoretical panoply afforded by contemporary philosophy. I cannot provide here compelling support for a more robust view like Aristotle's on Caston's account, which I think we should uphold. But I'll point to what I take to be crucial considerations that can be developed for that purpose.

As said, the Gallagher and Zahavi quotation in § 2 point to that effect towards epistemic asymmetries in how rational beings like us are in a position to know their own conscious mental attitudes, in contrast to their unconscious ones or those of others. Stoljar (2021, §§ 11-12) articulates them as his arguments 7 and 8 for the robust representational view of subjectivity apparently embraced by Aristotle, or the *acquaintance* variant. Rational beings cannot be "self-blind", as Shoemaker (2009, 36) famously puts it; inner awareness might be thought to afford the required evidentiary basis.

To explain the impossibility of self-blindness otherwise, consistent with his scepticism about subjectivity, Stoljar (2018) relies on Broome's (2013) weak conception of rationality, on which being rational just has to do with coherence relations among mental states. For instance, it is rationally required for one to will the means if one wills the ends and believes the means are needed for the ends; it is rationally required to intend to F if one believes that one's reasons require one to F. In our case, Stoljar (2018, 405) contends, the rational impossibility of self-blindness just comes to there being a rational requirement for one to believe that one is in a conscious state when one is in it and certain conditions obtain (having the required concepts to form the belief, attending to the state, etc.).

Now, many of us find Broome's conception of rationality too weak (Lord 2018, ch. 1); the problem with Stoljar's proposal is just a manifestation of that. Rational requirements like the one that Stoljar posits don't look like just brute facts; it seems that we should and can provide illuminating explanations for them based on the constitutive natures of the relevant mental attitudes, willing, believing, intending and so on. This doesn't need to be a *reductive* explanation. Inferential relations (which, as Stoljar and Broome assume, don't relate merely contents but contents together with the types of mental attitudes intending them) are themselves mental activity types, with specific natures. But philosophical accounts of willing, believing, intending and so on should contribute to make better sense of the means-end and enkratic inferential requirement mentioned above. The same applies to our case.

More robust theories like the 'higher-order' representationalist theories fill up this explanatory void of deflationism. But as we saw, these accounts also face very serious objections. For our purposes, the most serious among those that Caston (2002, 779-81) nicely summarises is that they make inner awareness a too extrinsic affair. On them, even in central cases (say, a very painful toothache that fully occupies one's attention) the higher-order attitude that makes it conscious might be hallucinatory. The opposite intuition is nicely captured by H.H. Price in this famous passage:

> When I see a tomato there is much that I can doubt. I can doubt whether it is a tomato that I am seeing, and not a cleverly painted piece of wax. I can doubt whether there is any material thing there at all. Perhaps what I took for a tomato was really a reflection; perhaps I am even the victim of some hallucination. One thing however I cannot doubt: that there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape, standing out from a background of other colour-patches, and having a certain visual depth, and that this whole field of colour is directly present to my consciousness. What the red patch is, whether a substance, or a state of a substance, or an event, whether it is physical or psychical or neither,

are questions that we may doubt about. But that something is red and round then and there I cannot doubt. (Price 1932, 3)

Price is here emphasising the main reason to question the alleged datum of transparency and to embrace Moore's 'other element'. He nicely captures what to me is the purest form of the intuitive phenomenological datum for subjectivity: while the deteriorated condition of my tooth that we may take my toothache to represent may well fail to be there alongside my painful experience, the pain itself that I feel cannot fail to exist; it is there, present, as much a part of the actual world as me and my current experience are. The same applies of course to the cubical pinkish field I experience when I take myself to see the Sellarsian pink cube. Stoljar's (2021, § 13) Argument 9, which articulates this point, is to my mind the strongest one for the more committal account of inner awareness that Aristotle, on Caston's interpretation, or the acquaintance variant go for. For Argument 9 Stoljar enlists quotations from Chalmers' work, in which he makes what I take to be Price's point in terms familiar from Peacocke's (1983) distinction between *sensational* and *representational* properties of experiences, and Block's (2003) claims for 'mental paint' – say, blurry visual experiences, or coming to attend to the variable features of visual experiences when the represented features (size, colour, and so on) on which we normally focus our attention are kept identical by perceptual constancy mechanism. I take Price's quotation to zoom on the crucial datum.[18]

Stoljar's (2021) response to arguments 7, 8, and 9 is just that skeptics have alternative explanations for the data; in the latter case, I take it, they should be debunking, 'Quining' (in Dennett's (1988) sense) considerations, perhaps along the lines of Williamson's (1996) influential 'anti-luminosity' argument, or those of Dennett himself. I agree with Stoljar that a full argument for one of the robust views, be it Aristotle's self-representationalism or the acquaintance view, should be abductive and take into consideration the proper explanation of many further data. I also think that such an argument can be made; I have mentioned some strands of it. Other significant considerations I cannot go into here have to do with the proper account of the 'indexical' character of first-personal, *de se* thoughts, including of course introspective thoughts.

I'll close by addressing the following question: is there a reason to choose between the two robust theories I have outlined, the

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18 My view and my considerations are very similar, if not identical, to Lowe's (1986; 2008); Lowe 2008, 69 reproduces the Price's datum of presence I am emphasising. On both our accounts, by the way, Price's sense data are 'red and round' only in a metonymical extended sense; with Peacocke 1983, properly speaking we should say that they are *red'* and *round'*.

self-representationalism of Kriegel, Zahavi and Aristotle's on Caston interpretation, on the one hand, and the acquaintance view of Duncan, Gertler and Williford, which I also support? As suggested above, I understand that a main motivation for sceptical positions like Stoljar's comes from familiar and well-motivated worries that a robust view on phenomenal consciousness might lead to anti-naturalist views, cf. Pelczar (2019) for a good recent representative. Such views either give rise to 'veil of perception' epistemic worries or, worse, take the external objects represented in perceptual experiences to be, as Pelczar contends, just ungrounded dispositions to produce conscious experiences. Views of this kind presuppose the representational view of inner awareness because states representing 'external' objects are on them epistemically, and perhaps ontologically grounded on states presenting inner features.

As I have argued, the acquaintance view doesn't require anything of the sort. If we assume some sort of epistemological foundationalism, it can be the form of 'dogmatism' advocated by Pollock (2001) and Pryor (2000), on which the epistemically foundational representations already are endowed with external content. As Lowe (1986, 2008) has it, the acquaintance view of subjectivity requires that, ontologically, awareness of external object be mediated by awareness of internal features of our conscious experiences. But it doesn't require epistemological mediation. As on Sellars' (1963) view, *qualia* proper (the features of conscious states we are acquainted with in inner awareness by being in them) are theoretical entities, whose character (whether events or particulars, types or tokens), as Price intimates in the quotation above, we learn about on the basis of the explanatory roles we ascribe them. A view along these lines, as I have argued, allows for the limitations in our knowledge of *qualia* proper on which Williamson (1996) bases his anti-luminosity considerations; prevents serious objections in the vicinity of Wittgenstein's Private Language argument; and, in principle at least, may be compatible with naturalism. Of course, only to the extent that we can deal with the 'hard problem' of consciousness in the straightforward way that a robust view on inner awareness requires.

This is not a knock-down argument for the acquaintance view, because even if anti-naturalist views require the self-representation version, some self-representational view might also be compatible with naturalism; as Caston emphasises, it is hard to think that Aristotle would have thought otherwise. But the big-picture issues I have outlined point towards what I take to be true main consideration for the acquaintance view. To wit, that it is difficult to justify the view that our relation with the direct items of awareness is intentional or representational – as opposed to just a real relation, even if one difficult to fit into a naturalist world view. This cannot be motivated on phenomenological grounds; and, to motivate it on theoretical

grounds, we would need an account of the nature of intentionality or representation I for one find it difficult to envisage.

I want to conclude by quoting from Caston on how to approach the history of philosophy:

> the history of philosophy performs a valuable service when it examines the systematic connections between positions not causal ones. It is difficult, if not impossible, to establish genuine causal influences. But even if one could, they could never be as interesting as the limits and possibilities of the systematic concerns themselves. (Caston 2002, 804)

I hope I have at least made clear the extent to which Caston's excellent article meets the standard he sets for himself here.

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Λόγος as an Anti-Psychologistic Conception of Meaning
Heidegger's Interpretation of the Aristotelian Notion of Language in the Light of Its First Courses (1921-1927)

David Hereza Modrego
Universitat de València, Espanya

Abstract The article attempts to clarify Heidegger's interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of λόγος, often misunderstood as a mythical and obscure conception of language. As it is shown, Heidegger's interpretation aims, first and foremost, to underline the potentiality of λόγος as a historical element against the psychologistic conception of meaning and language, common in the philosophical and philological context of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. In this way, I try to grasp the significance of Heidegger's interpretation of Greek philosophy, offering the basis for a re-evaluation of his exegetical work.

Keywords λόγος. Meaning. Anti-Psychologism. Meaningfulness. Aristotle. Heidegger.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Heidegger's Criticism of the Psychologistic Interpretation of Aristotle. – 2.1 Fundamental Lines of Aristotle's Psychological Interpretation: From *De Interpretatione* 16a3-8). – 2.2 Heidegger's Alternative Exegesis of *De Interpretatione* (16a3-8). –2.3 Heidegger's Alternative Reading: From *De Interpretatione* to *De Anima*. – 3 The λόγος as a Mode of Being of Human Existence: The Meaningfulness of the World. – 3.1 Heidegger's Anti-Psychological Reading of *De Anima*. – 3.2 The Implication of Heidegger's Interpretation: The Meaningfulness of the World as the True Nature of λόγος. – 4 Conclusion: Toward a New Conception of Truth and Phenomenology. – 4.1 The Relationship Between λόγος and ἀλήθεια in Psychologism. – 4.2 Heidegger's Alternative Reading of ἀλήθεια. – 4.3 The Relationship of λόγος and ἀλήθεια as the Ground of the Phenomenological Analysis.

1 Introduction

One of the most famous passages of the "Introduction" of *Being and Time*, if not of the whole book, is dedicated to "the concept of logos" (*B. Der Begriff des Logos*).[1] In less than four pages, this concept is analysed by Heidegger to obtain its "primary" (*primäre*) and "basic meaning" (*Grundbedeutung*) (43): "to make manifest 'what is being talked about' in discourse" (43). With this definition and for the first time in Heidegger's published work, the λόγος is linked to the ἀληθεύειν and the ἀποφαίνεσθαι; a relationship that, as is well known, shapes one of the fundamental ideas of his interpretation of Greek thinking and language in general. That relationship resonates in the famous *dictum*: "language is the house of Being" (*die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins*, GA 9, 313).

However, Heidegger's description of the λόγος in *Being and Time* is famous, above all, because of the difficulties it implies to the readers, given the multiple references to Aristotelian writings and other no less thorny Greek terms (such as ἀπόφανσις, δηλοῦν, σύνθεσις, ἀλήθεια, ψεύδεσθαι, αἴσθησις or νοεῖν); moreover, the complexity of this short passage increases because of Heidegger's argumentative strategy (Dreyfus 1990, 30-1; Blattner 2007, 27-9). Through the description of the "concept of logos", he seeks a double objective: first, to expose what he considers to be the original and basic idea of the λόγος in ancient Greek philosophy; second, in doing so, he tries to clarify the notion of phenomenology, i.e. of the "*logos* of phenomena"[2].

Thus, the problem to understand Heidegger's interpretation of the λόγος becomes even more challenging when, after describing its ground and apparently profound meaning in the light of the Aristotelian writings, he affirms (*GA* 2, 46):

> The expression 'phenomenology' can be formulated in Greek as λέγειν τὰ φαινόμενα. But λέγειν means ἀποφαίνεσθαι. Hence phenomenology: ἀποφαίνεσθαι τὰ φαινόμενα – to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself 'phenomenology'. But this expresses nothing other than the maxim formulated above: 'To the things themselves!'

1 *Heideggers Gesamtausgabe*, henceforth *GA*, 2, 43-6

2 This interpretation of λόγος is only the second step of a description of the meaning of "phenomenology", while the first step focuses on a complex discussion about another Greek term: "phenomenon" (*GA* 2, 38-43).

After reading this passage, an immediate question arises: to what extent does an exam of the λόγος in Aristotle, as well as its relation to the φαίνεσθαι and the ἀλήθεια, clarify the lemma 'to the things themselves!'? This conclusion even leads one to doubt the necessity of such an excursus between Aristotelian concepts. More importantly, other questions remain unsolved: what is λόγος? What does it mean "to let (something) be seen from itself" (46) or "to make manifest 'what is being talked about' in discourse" (43)?

In this paper, I would like to answer these questions on the basis of an analysis of Heidegger's writings before *Being and Time*. In doing so, I will not deal with all the aspects of the Aristotelian concept of λόγος pointed out by Heidegger's interpretation; my intention is only to delineate the first ineluctable and sometimes forgotten most basic goal of Heidegger's description of λόγος, by virtue of which it is possible to understand the difficult §7 and the relationship of the λόγος with other Greek concepts, such as the ἀλήθεια (which represent, according to Heidegger, an "ontological theory of truth").

In my opinion, this basic goal consists in the fight against the psychologist theory of meaning as "internal state" that traverses Heidegger's first lecture courses (and not only his doctoral work, *GA* 1, 59-188; see e.g. *GA* 57/58, 63 ff.; *GA* 20, 124 ff.; *GA* 2, 61 ff., 178). In this way, I try to demonstrate how his interpretation of λόγος in Aristotle illuminates some aspects of phenomenology. The first and most fundamental, on which I will concentrate here, is the *anti-psychologistic conception of meaning and language* presupposed in this kind of investigation and discovered by Heidegger in the Aristotelian notion of λόγος.

To expose the anti-psychologistic Heideggerian exegesis of λόγος, I will first focus on Heidegger's criticism of classical studies of Aristotle, which would have neglected this aspect of the Aristotelian notion. In Heidegger's view, previous researchers of Aristotle (from Trendelenburg to Jaeger) misunderstood Aristotle by following the philosophical literature determined by psychologism and saw him as the first advocate of an instrumentalist theory of language and a psychologistic conception of meaning (2.).

Starting from Heidegger's criticisms, in a second moment I will expose his alternative interpretation: the λόγος is not a cognitive capacity, among others, of the human mind, but it is the *way of Being of human existence*, the structure of *Being in the world* (3.). As it will be shown, this idea leads to deny that language is an instrument that can be used to express our 'internal' mental acts (i.e. the 'meaning' of the objects for psychologism of nineteenth-century philosophy).

At the end of this analysis of Heidegger's interpretation of the λόγος, it will be possible to return to the section on "the concept of logos" (*GA* 2, 43-6) and understand the relationship to the particu-

lar conception of ἀλήθεια in Aristotle (4.). So, from the anti-psychologistic theory discovered by Heidegger through the study of Aristotle, it would be possible to glimpse the foundation of a pre-predicative or pre-judgmental theory of truth that Heidegger presents with the Greek term 'ἀλήθεια' and which today it is still the center of an intense polemic (see Berti 1990, Cordero 2020).

2 Heidegger's Criticism of the Psychologistic Interpretation of Aristotle

2.1 Fundamental Lines of Aristotle's Psychological Interpretation: From *De Interpretatione* 16a3-8)

Heidegger's interpretation of λόγος starts from a radical opposition to the instrumentalist conception of language attributed to Aristotle, which was very usual at the time (see Kampe 1870), as it is still today (see e.g. Noriega-Olmos 2013). This understanding 'seems evident' from the famous opening paragraph of the *De Interpretatione* (16a3-8):

> Ἔστι μὲν οὖν τὰ ἐν τῇ γωνῇ τῶν ἐν τῇ ψυξῇ παθημάτων σύμβολα, καὶ τὰ γραγόμενα τῶν ἐν τῇ φωνῇ, καὶ ὥσπερ οὐδὲ γράμματα πᾶσι τὰ αὐτα, οὐδε φωναὶ αἱ αὐταί - ὧν μέντοι ταῦτα σημεῖα πρώτων, ταὐτὰ πᾶσι παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς, καὶ ὧν ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα πράγματα ἤδη ταὐτά.

> Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions in the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies (Harold P. Cook 1962).

According to the psychologistic reading, in this famous passage the Stagirite claims that external objects to the mind (τὰ πράγματα) (level 1) would generate certain internal affections to the soul or "representations" (τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθήματα) (level 2); those representations, then, could have their further expression in the language, in the λόγος, either in the spoken or in the written one (level 3 and 4). Therefore, in *De Interpretatione* 16a3-8 the λόγος is shown as a symbolic instrument for the possible communication with others about the representations of our soul or mind. As Lo Piparo has demonstrated (2005, 34), this conception could be summarised in the following scheme **[tab. 1]**:

Table 1 Psychologistic conception of *De Interpretatione*, 16a3-8

λόγος language	Level 4	τὰ γραφόμενα (τὰ γράμματα) Written marks	**σύμβολα / σημεῖα Symbols / signs**
	Level 3	τὰ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ (φωναί) Spoken sounds	
Mental processes	Level 2	τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθήματα Affections of the soul	ὁμοιώματα Images
	Level 1	τὰ πράγματα Things	

From this general exegesis it follows that 'meaning' is something generated by the mind, only thanks to the "affections of the soul" (τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ παθήματα), and therefore is an 'internal state' of it. This theory has a certain corroboration in the *De Anima* – to which Aristotle refers in the fragment of the *De Interpretatione* (16a8-9) –: from perception (*De Anima* B 416b33 ff.), simple characteristics of the object are *unified* by the mind creating internal images (φαντασίαι) of an object (*De Anima* Γ 427a15 ff.; see too *Met.* A 980a25 ff.), which 'correspond' to the object outside. Moreover, it is this union of perception that makes it possible to create a true or a false image and, therefore, true or false knowledge of the things, as Aristotle says in the following lines of the *De Interpretatione* (16a3-9)

> Ἔστι δέ, ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ ὁτὲ μὲν νόημα ἄνευ τοῦ ἀληθεύειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι, ὁτὲ δὲ ἤδη ᾧ ἀνάγκη τούτων ὑπάρχειν θάτερον, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῇ φωνῇ· περὶ γὰρ σύνθεσιν καὶ διαίρεσίν ἐστι τὸ ψεῦδός καὶ τὸ ἀληθές.

> As at times there are thoughts in our mind unaccompanied by truth or by falsity, while there are others at times that have necessarily one or the other, so it is in our speech, for combination and division are essential before you can have truth and falsity.

In sum, according to this interpretation, based on the mentioned passages of *De Interpretatione* and *De Anima*, it is possible to infer that the Aristotelian theory of language and meaning is very close to the one proposed in Locke's *Essay* ([1690] 1975, book 2, ch. 32; book 3, chs. 1-2); moreover, this understanding seeks to underline that the Stagirite, not the English philosopher, is the father of the psychologistic explanation of signification and the judicative theo-

ry of truth[3]. Such an assumption is what Heidegger tries to deny on numerous occasions during his lecture courses and in *Being and Time* (*GA* 2, 284).

2.2 Heidegger's Alternative Exegesis of *De Interpretatione* (16a3-8)

To understand Heidegger's alternative exegesis, it is necessary to reconstruct his objections to the interpretation that I have just presented (*GA* 21, 150 ff.). Therefore, it is convenient to go back to the central passage of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* (16a3-8), on which the understanding of the other quoted passages (*De Anima* B 416b33 and *De Interpretatione* 16a9-13) depends.

First of all, as Heidegger points out, it should be noticed that in this famous passage, there is no explicit mention of λόγος. Aristotle refers to the 'spoken words' and the 'writing', but not to λόγος – only in *De Interpretatione* 16b26 does this notion appear. Moreover, the παθήματα τῆς ψυχῆς should not necessarily be interpreted as *internal* states of the soul. Heidegger underlines that Aristotle does not use the term 'affection' (πάθη), which *could* be understood as a 'state (of mind)'[4], but παθήματα, "that which moves and is apprehended as moving" (Heidegger *GA* 21, 167); according to Heidegger, παθήματα is to be understood in the general sense of 'apprehending something', a sense that doesn't refer to the division between the "external world" and my "intern state of mind". The same would be true for τὰ πράγματα, that Heidegger prefers to translate as "the thing in its use" (167), following the original sense of the word (i.e. πρᾶξις). Far from attributing any particular value to etymology, Heidegger aims to disassociate the idea of 'thing' from its meaning as '*external* object to the mind', ascribed to it by a psychologistic reading of this passage. So, for Heidegger, the whole text of *De Interpretatione* could be understood without the division between the internal and external world, which Aristotle does not explicitly state.

The same could be said about ταῦτα ὁμοιώματα πράγματα (*De Interpretatione* 16a8) read as "representation" or "correspondence with things" (Heidegger *GA* 21, 167; also, Lo Piparo 2005, 31). Moreover, attributing 'representation' or even 'correspondence' to ὁμοίως is at

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3 Of course, things are more complicated in the literature of the early twentieth century (see, for example, Külpe 1915). Still, I will not enter into the details of that discussion since my goal in this paper is to clarify Heidegger's point of view.

4 Although this is not the only sense that can be attribute to it. "Aber im Text steht nicht πάθη, was allenfalls Zustände bedeuten könnte, sondern παθήματα, das, was begegnet und als Begegnendes hingenommen wird, Affektion in einem weiten Sinn" (*GA* 21, 167). The meaning of the term πάθη is more complex, as the famous §29 of *Sein und Zeit* shows (see *GA* 2, 138).

least problematic, given the wide use of the latter within the *corpus aristotelicum* (in addition to Heidegger or Lo Piparo, see Martínez Marzoa 1998). Therefore, also the idea of σύνθεσις and διαίρεσις (*De Interpretatione* 16a13) as a cognitive or psychological union of simple ideas is not present in Aristotle's text. The Stagirite merely indicates that "combination and division are essential before you can have truth and falsity" without specifying in what terms this combination and division should be understood. Because of the indetermination of this passage, the psychologistic reading could be a possible interpretation of the famous passage (see Kampe 1870, Noriega-Olmos 2013), but not the only one, nor necessarily the most adequate.

As Heidegger tries to show in his courses, one can read the Aristotelian *De Interpretatione* without presupposing the division between the internal and the external world, as psychologism claims. It is precisely this division presupposed by psychologism that is denied by Husserl in his phenomenological investigations (see, for example, Husserl [1907] 1973, where the term 'Reduktion' appears for the first time), in which Heidegger, as is well known, was immersed in his first years as a teacher in Freiburg. Thus, it is understandable why Heidegger entitles his courses as *Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles* (Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle, *GA* 61 and 62) and why, recalling these years, Heidegger says (*GA* 14, 97):

> The more familiarity I gained with phenomenological vision, the less I was able to separate myself from Aristotle and the other Greek thinkers, and the more I was able to interpret Aristotle's writings.

2.3 Heidegger's Alternative Reading: From *De Interpretatione* to *De Anima*

Nevertheless, if the *De Interpretatione* (16a3-8) must not be understood in psychological terms, what is 'language' (λόγος) by Aristotle? If it is not a tool through which one can transmit the internal meaning, what is it then? For Heidegger, what Aristoteles means with λόγος has to do with a mode of existence of human existence. Following the famous statement of *Politics* (A 2, 1253a9), λόγος is what characterises human beings as opposed to other animals: the human being is ζῷον λόγον ἔχον. To deny the psychologistic interpretation, Heidegger claims that in that famous sentence ἔχειν must not be understood in terms of 'having', e.g., a faculty, something that we can use or not (as the psychologistic interpretation of language seems to admit). The λόγος is essential; a human being cannot be thought without the λόγος as, for example, Aristotle points out in *Nicomachean Ethics*: "what is proper to the mode of existing [ψυχή] of the human being is the activity

according to the λόγος or not without the λόγος [κατὰ λόγον ἢ μὴ ἄνευ λόγου]" (1098a7-8; 1097b28-1098a14; again, on the usual interpretations of this fragment see Lo Piparo 2005, 15). The λόγος or language is not a 'tool' that human beings can use or not to express their representations, an 'organ' of their mind, but something inseparable from our existence. But to prove that the discussion must focus on *De Anima*.

So, this alternative reading depends on the significance attributed to the investigation of the *De Anima* and its central notion, the ψυχή, on which the core of the question lies. If ψυχή is understood as 'mind' or 'inner consciousness', then the above-quoted fragments of *Nicomachean Ethics* or *Politics* can be understood in a psychologistic way. That is why in his first courses, Heidegger pays more attention to the *De Anima* rather than the *De Interpretatione*. Only by elucidation of the meaning of ψυχή as a mode of being or existing or living (and not reducing it to psychologistic terms, like soul or mind), it is possible to grasp the original understanding of ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, and, therefore, of the λόγος.

3 The λόγος as a Mode of Being of Human Existence: The Meaningfulness of the World

3.1 Heidegger's Anti-Psychological Reading of *De Anima*

Heidegger focuses his attention on the first pages of book B to achieve an anti-psychologistic reading of the *De Anima*. Here, Aristotle points out that it would be wrong to conceive the ψυχή in terms of something that is 'within' the body or somehow separable from it, for ψυχή is to the body as the form is to the matter (*De Anima* B 412b5-10). Just as there is no wax without some shape, there is no living being, no life (ζωή), without ψυχή. An ontological 'independence' of the mind, reflected in the psychologistic division between the internal mind and the external objects, is never affirmed by the Stagirite. Therefore, Heidegger states (*GA* 22, 182):

> Aristotle has outlined in his treatise Περὶ ψυχῆς the first delineations of an ontology of life. It would be entirely wrong to see it as a psychological study or to call it so.

This statement is a clear reference to books such as Kampe 1870, where the work Περὶ ψυχῆς is always mentioned as Aristotle's Psychology (Kampe 1870, 51). But, in my opinion, Heidegger's statement does not mean that Aristotle is only a philosopher of the ontology of life, nor that it is impossible to admit a particular psychologist dimension in the *De Anima*. Considering this treatise as mere psychology would

be a misunderstanding of it, but, at the same time, it would be inconsistent to deny that it contains some of the basis for the psychological or biological study of the human being. Although a few other statements could give another impression[5], Heidegger himself claims that both phenomenology and psychology "have their spiritual and historical roots in Greek philosophy" (*GA* 61, 92). Nevertheless, recognising this dimension of *De Anima* does not imply that its psychological understanding is the original and the most philosophical relevant.

In its original sense, the ψυχή is the configuration that life adopts in its 'existing', that is, in its relation to the world (*intentio*) as something living, without presupposing an intra- or extra-corporeal reality. Here arises again the importance of Husserl's theory of intentionality in Heidegger's reading of Aristotle. As Heidegger himself explains in his courses (*GA* 20, 46 ff.), the main discovery of Husserl's phenomenology consists in the negation of the psychologistic explanation of consciousness, according to which the mind is related to external objects through different kinds of capacities, like 'perception', 'thinking', 'remembering', etc. In opposition to this theory, Husserl affirms that all these terms are only *modi* of my intentional relation with objects, not different kinds of relations with different objects ('the thing itself', 'the representation', 'the concept', etc.). In fact, all the *modi* have a relation between them (see *GA* 20, 59). From this perspective, the *De Anima* can be understood as a phenomenological analysis *ante litteram*: instead of being an object 'inside' the world with different faculties that allow it to create a relation to 'other objects', ψυχή would be the 'place' where the world in general, i.e. the structure of the whole world in its different *modi* of relation opens up. ψυχή, as well as 'consciousness' by Husserl, is not an object in the world, but the correlation to the world. Actually, in Heidegger's view, that's the reason why Aristotle can claim in *De Anima*: ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ ὄντα πώς ἐστι (*De Anima* Γ 431b21; see *GA* 2, 19). Therefore, what Aristotle tries to define in *De Anima* is the kind of *modus* of intentionality that can be ascribed to the human being.

This conclusion highlights that the different 'possibilities' (δύναμεις) of the ψυχή described by Aristotle in his treatise, among which the λόγος stands out, should not be understood under the idea of 'faculty' or 'capacity'. The Greek term, ἡ ψυχή, expresses the modes in which the living entity exists; so, intellect, sensation, motion, stillness, nutrition, and growing (see *De Anima* B 413a20) are not characteristics that are added to or subtracted from the body, but several modes of being of the existence called 'life'. Therefore, Heidegger ([1922] 2007, 27) claims:

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[5] For example, when Heidegger claims "There is no trace in Aristotle of either that concept of truth as 'correspondence' or of the usual conception of the λόγος as a valid judgment and much less of a 'theory of representation'" (*GA* 62, 377; see *GA* 2, 284).

δύναμις means: 'can'. Aristotle understands the self as δύναμις: 'I can' (in which 'I' and 'can' are not split).

In other words: I am not something *in* the world (something 'vorhanden'), and, apart from it, I 'can' do something in it, like understanding it. My existence is not independent of that act. This conception is opposed to the description of the psychologist, according to which, first of all, we perceive some qualities, then we create φαντασίαι or mental images and, afterwards, if necessary, we express those images through language. Therefore, the λόγος or 'language', as a mode of the ψυχή, must be understood as a way of existing, of being in the world. One does not just *use language but lives in it*.

3.2 The Implication of Heidegger's Interpretation: the Meaningfulness of the World as the True Nature of λόγος

The λόγος is the human being's way of existing, which is qualitatively and ontologically different from the *modus* of other living beings. But what is, therefore, the language, if not an instrument? It is clear that, in any case, language is the place of meaning. As Aristotle points out: "λόγος is significant speech [σημαντική]" (*De Interpretatione* 16b19). Now, Heidegger interprets this statement in a more radical way (compare to 2.1). If λόγος is always σημαντική and, at the same time, λόγος is the necessary way of being of human existence, there can be no experience or element in our linguistic world without meaning.

For example, if someone, during a speech, suddenly says '*wrable*', it is not true that it means nothing, that this person has pronounced something 'without sense'. In hearing this sound, one can think that maybe it is a way to create perplexity or that it is just a joke. In any way, it would be wrong to affirm that that sound has no meaning because I cannot relate it to an 'internal state of mind'; on the contrary, it is significant because for the human being everything has a meaning; *the world only opens up as the place of meaning*. It is not that there are some elements in the world, like sound or perceptions, that have no meaning or that must be connected to other elements (representations) in order to have it. Even when I come across something I do not know, like an unexpected sound, that same not-knowing does not appear meaning*less*, but *as* something; the sound is maybe a burst pipe, or the neighbor falling, etc. Moreover, all things are always linked to a course of action because of their meaning. This unexpected sound can mean 'we must leave the building' or 'someone needs help'.

In his first course on Aristotle in 1922, Heidegger attempts to formulate this conception of λόγος by talking about the 'meaningfulness' of the world in general (*GA* 61, 90-1):

> Meaningfulness is a categorical determination of the world; the objects of a world, the things belonging to the world, are experienced in the character of meaningfulness. [...] Objects do not in the first place exist as bare realities, e.g. objects of nature, invested in the course of experience with a character of the world [i.e. of meaningfulness].

The human being never perceives neutral sounds, simple, *pure data*, to which it then attributes a meaning. The λόγος always articulates our world, i.e. is *meaningful*. Thus, ζῷον λόγον ἔχον indicates an animal that always lives in a meaningful world. This is the original sense of 'having language' and 'living' in it. This is the ground meaning of the famous statement: "language is the house of Being" (*die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins*) (*GA* 9, 313).

This reading can ultimately be corroborated through the difference established by Aristotle in the first pages of his *Politics* between the voice (φωνή), capable of emitting sounds, and the language, the λόγος (*Politics* 1253a10-15):

> ἡ μὲν οὖν φωνὴ τοῦ λυπηροῦ καὶ ἡδέος ἐστὶ σημεῖον, διὸ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει ζῴοις [...], ὁ δὲ λόγος ἐπὶ τῷ δηλοῦν ἐστι τὸ συμφέρον καὶ τὸ βλαβερόν, ὥστε καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ ἄδικον· τοῦτο γὰρ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἴδιον, τὸ μόνον ἀγαθοῦ καὶ κακοῦ καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἴσθησιν ἔχειν.

> The mere voice, it is true, can indicate pain and pleasure, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well [...], but speech [λόγος] is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong; for it is the special property of man in distinction from the other animals that he alone has perception of good and bad and right and wrong and the other moral qualities.

So, there is a difference between the ψυχή, determined by pain and pleasure, and the ψυχή of human life, determined by what is just and unjust or good and evil. Only the latter dimension makes the meaningfulness of the world, since it represents the λόγος and, therefore, the existence of the human being as such. In the light of Heidegger's interpretation, the essence of the human being consists in being always in a world traversed by meaning or values in general that makes things appear 'as something'[6], as Aristotle affirms

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6 Here in a broader sense: all things are always seen 'as something', judged by their usefulness, their aesthetic impression, etc. Heidegger is critical with regard to the concept of value, as it is used by neo-Kantian philosophy. See e.g. *GA* 56/57, 29-62; 129 ff,

with the values 'right and wrong'. Those values can be – as Aristotle says – good and bad or right and wrong (*Politics* 1253a15), but also others, like the usefulness. There is nothing in the world, in our experience, that does not concern one kind of end or value, because there is nothing no-related to meaningfulness. From this point on, the question about these fundamental values or meanings of our immediate relation to the world arises, as Heidegger underlines in *Being and time* (*GA* 2 90-118). In any case, that is a further question that must not be answered here.

Thus, the main point of Heidegger's interpretation of λόγος is that language is not an instrument and, at the same time, meaning is not something internal or mental. 'Meaning' is the articulation of the world, so nothing meaningless could have a place in it and language cannot be reduced to a set of sounds that maybe express the thoughts. Both affirmations are two sides of the same coin, and both are expressed by the notion of λόγος in the *corpus aristotelicum*. Hence, this Aristotelian concept is the cornerstone of the anti-psychologistic conception of language and meaning – something that Heidegger, moreover, applied to all Greek thinkers (see *GA* 18, 107; *GA* 19, 190-2).

4 Conclusion: Toward a New Conception of Truth and Phenomenology

The anti-psychological notion of meaning that arises from the Aristotelian λόγος has significant consequences for the understanding of truth and phenomenology. In conclusion, I would like to dwell, briefly, on these two aspects.

4.1 The Relationship Between λόγος and ἀλήθεια in Psychologism

For the psychologist, language is a *medium* between mental processes and things of the external world; according to this theory, truth values are only in language, specifically in judgment (as described by Heidegger *GA* 62, 377; *GA* 21, 167). Therefore, truth is conceived as the correspondence between our judgments (reflections of mental images) and things, implying that there is no truth outside the judgment since perception is neither true nor false. As it was pointed out in 2.1, if in the perception of something there is no 'combination' or 'separation', there is no truth or falsity (*De Interpretatione* 16a3-9). If I perceive the colour 'white', there can be no possibility to be wrong in that. On the contrary, if I affirm: 'the book is white' (i.e. the book appears *as* being white, *as* something white), here there is a combination (σύνθεσιν) and therefore, the possibility to be wrong: ὅτι μὲν

γὰρ λευκόν, οὐ ψεύδεται, εἰ δὲ τοῦτο τὸ λευκὸν ἢ ἄλλο τι, ψεύδεται (*De Anima* Γ 428b20-5).

Late nineteenth-century studies interpreted Aristotle's works from this perspective, describing him as the father of the judicative theory of truth (see Maier [1886] 1970, 6). According to that, ἀλήθεια by Aristotle is only possible in the unity of two elements, and this structure is not the structure of all kind of experience, but only the structure of judgments, since the pre-judicative experiences (like perception, for example) does not imply it.

4.2 Heidegger's Alternative Reading of ἀλήθεια

As explained in 3.2, Heidegger's interpretation shows that for Aristotle there is no such thing as 'meaningless' in the world and, from this important assumption, Heidegger affirms that all our experience "has the structure of something [that appears] as something" (*GA* 2, 198). As mentioned before, something like '*xrable*' or a simple 'sound' always appears, according to Heidegger, 'as' being something referring to some values or ends in general. Following this consideration, one can affirm that this happens even in those experiences that are not judgments (where traditionally the structure of 'something that appears *as* something' was placed), i.e. this happens even in the pre-judicative experiences. Since everything, even perception, is understood from meaning, everything is judged as useful or useless, or as right or wrong, etc., i.e. as having a value in general, '*as*' something (*Als*) (see *GA* 2, 197-212). For example, 'the wall of my room' appears to me as 'boring' or 'something that must be painted'. The 'pure perception' of a 'quality' appears to me '*as*' useful or not in order to a concrete course of action, etc. That 'as', usually identify with the value of truth or falsehood, is the structure of all relations to the world, not only of judgment. Therefore, if that is correct, and ἀλήθεια (truth) means the structure of 'something that appears *as* something', then there cannot be an experience that is not 'true' in a particular way.

The confirmation of this conclusion from the Aristotelian notion of λόγος is found by Heidegger in Aristotle's statement of *De Anima*, where he claims that only in the combination (σύνθεσιν) and separation (διαίρεσις) can be falsity; otherwise, *it is always 'true'* (ἀεὶ ἀληθής) (*De Anima* Γ 427b11). It is important to stress that Aristotle does not affirm that perception is neither true nor false, as stated by the judicative theory of truth (see, for example, Russell 2001 [1912], 70). Aristotle repeats several times that perceptions are *true*, but not false: εἶτα αἱ μὲν ἀληθεῖς (*De Anima* Γ 428a5). This theory implies that there must be, at least, two kinds of truths, as Aristotle points out in *De Anima* (Γ 430a25 ff.): the first one con-

cerns the "intellection of indivisible things" (νόησις τῶν ἀδιαρέτων), while the second one the "intellection of compound things" (νοήσις τῶν διαρετών) (Γ 430a26)[7].

Following Aristotle, Heidegger assumes that there must be two kinds of truths; he does not deny that the judgment is characterised by the possibility of being true or false; the only assertion that he seeks to cancel is that judgment is the *only* place for truth. In Heidegger's terms: there are two kinds of 'as' in which the world is shown, the pre-judicative 'as' and the judicative 'as' (see *GA* 2, 210). So, in line with Aristotle, Heidegger differentiates between an apophantic or judicative 'as' (*als*) ('the table is showing itself *as* brown' or 'the table is brown') and a more original, pre-judicative 'as' (*als*), named by Heidegger "hermeneutical" (*GA* 2, 210-11), e.g. 'the table shows itself as being solid enough to keep the book'.

From this assessment, Heidegger deduces that the ἀλήθεια or truth is the basic articulation of the world, as it was a correlative notion to the notion of 'meaning'. Every relation to the world is mediated by an *'as'* and, therefore, by what Heidegger calls ἀλήθεια. So far, the world always appears having meaning, the world ἀληθεύει, is opened as truth. The reason why Heidegger uses this term lies in the fact that, according to him, the source of this pre-judicative or pre-predicative theory comes from Aristotle and from Greek philosophy in general.

For the sake of concreteness, I will not dwell further on the question of ante-predicative truth, which remains one of the fundamental objections against Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle and Greek philosophy. With this brief indication, I only aimed to show that this theory has no mythical character (as claims Cordero 2020), allowing to grasp further aspects and a further discussion of it (as the one developed by Berti 1990).

4.3 The Relationship of λόγος and ἀλήθεια as the Ground of the Phenomenological Analysis

In sum, Heidegger's first reading of Aristotle's philosophy is aimed against a determinate interpretation of the notion of λόγος, by which language is considered an instrument to communicate mental and internal images of our mind to others; on the contrary, as he claims,

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[7] That is the reason why Heidegger's interpretation of truth does not contradict the affirmation of *De Interpretatione* 16b33: "Not every sentence is a statement-making sentence, but only those in which there is truth or falsity. There is no truth or falsity in all sentences: prayer is a sentence but is neither true nor false". According to Heidegger's interpretation, prayer is a kind of truth, but not the same as it is the object of study in *De Interpretatione*.

λόγος signifies 'meaningfulness', an essential characteristic of human understanding of the world and of human life in general. The direct consequence of this re-reading shows that ἀλήθεια, traditionally only associated with 'judgment', must be understood in a broader sense, so that the place of truth can also be pre-judgmental. Heidegger's anti-psychologistic reading of the λόγος in Aristotle constitutes one of the pillars of his exegesis of Greek philosophers, but also the ground of his existential analytic. Therefore, Aristotle stands as a philosophical "example" (*Vorbild*) to be followed (*GA* 63, 5). The relationship between λόγος and ἀλήθεια is the most fundamental learning that phenomenology can extract from Aristotle's *corpus*. In order to explain that, Heidegger starts *Being and Time* with the excursus of §7; and that is the reason why Heidegger wants to present phenomenology through the λόγος, translated as "to make manifest 'what is being talked about' in discourse" (*GA* 2, 43).

By defining the λόγος as "to make manifest 'what is being talked about' in discourse" Heidegger defends, first and foremost, that 'meaning' ('what is being talked about' in discourse) is not something internal in our mind. Thus, philosophy must consider the idea of meaning for *what it is*, namely what is *manifest* in speaking, in language, *without presupposing* the psychological (and most natural) conception of it. This elimination opens a new view of truth and of the 'world', which is no more understood as the set of objects, but the *space of meaning*. The phenomenology, therefore, must be an analysis of this 'space' and its possibility[8]. Only from this new standpoint one can see what language is and penetrate in other aspects of it. In short, with this formulation of λόγος and the particular excursus of 7§, Heidegger wants to avoid a specific way of thinking reality that makes impossible a real philosophical investigation. With this assessment, Heidegger is presenting his philosophical project.

This explains why a treatise like *Being and Time* has to resort to a definition of λόγος that *seems* empty, like the following: "what is 'being talked about' in discourse", but by which 'no theory' about the 'meaning' is presupposed; discovering such theory is the goal of the rest of the book. The same reason explains why Heidegger sees in his Greek translation of the title "λέγειν τὰ φαινόμενα" a precise expression of the motto: "To the things themselves!" (*GA* 2, 46). This lemma contains first (although not only) an anti-psychologistic program. So, the justification of the original or primary sense of λόγος coincides with the clarification of Heidegger's philosophical goal. Hence, the

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8   To cancel this kind of psychological presupposition is the starting point of phenomenology, not only Husserl's, but Heidegger's too, although he uses other terms and references. For the importance of Husserl's starting point in Heidegger's (more radical) thought, see von Herrmann 1981; 2000.

central importance of an analysis of the concept of λόγος at the very beginning of his investigation, as it is presented in the "Introduction" of *Being and Time* (*B. Der Begriff des Logos*) (43-6).

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Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia